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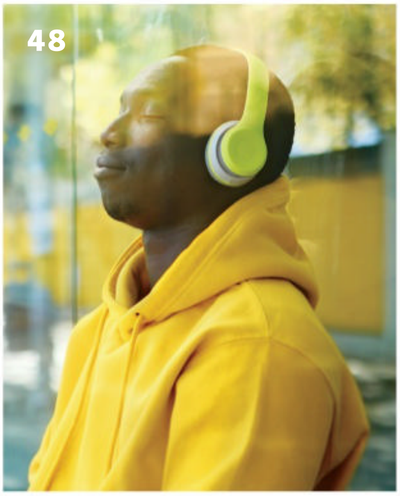

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Information in *The Complete Guide to Intermittent Fasting for Beginners* is provided for awareness, education and general information. Health benefits of various diets, foods and weight-loss strategies are the opinion of the author, and there may be differing views on many of the topics covered, including evolving research, opinions, benefits and efficacy. This magazine is meant to inform the general reader and is not a substitute for medical advice by a physician, dietitian and/or nutritionist. Please consult a doctor if you have chronic ailments or feel adverse side effects after starting a nutrition regimen, and do not ingest items to which you have sensitivities or may be allergic. Readers should consult a licensed health professional who knows their personal medical history on matters relating to their health and well-being, including being aware of potential interactions with medications they are taking and conflicts with other wellness-related goals.

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THE BASICS

This straightforward way of red-light-green-light eating may be how your body was designed to work.

THE PAUSE THAT REFRESHES

Changing when you eat may make a big difference in your metabolic health and body composition.

by JANET LEE

WHEN IT COMES to weight loss, the advice to not eat or to stop eating sooner is much more easily said than done for most people. The chips beckon, the chocolate lures, your emotions conspire to prompt you to pour a second glass of wine or dip into the ice cream stash. Notwithstanding such difficult advice, the hottest trend in diets—intermittent fasting—involves going hours, sometimes a day or more, at a time without eating.

Fasting is common in various religions: Seventh Day Adventists do it on certain days throughout the year so they can focus on prayer. Jews fast for 24 hours to cleanse themselves on Yom Kippur. Muslims fast from sunrise to sundown for an entire month during Ramadan. Others like to fast to bring clarity to their thoughts or to purify or energize their bodies.

And while it's not fasting, there's been research over the years about the benefits of following a very

You'll be surprised at how full you'll feel during your eating window.

low-calorie diet day in and day out and how it may turn on genes that slow the aging process (most studies have been done in animals). Intermittent fasting (IF) is a more palatable spin on this approach: You can eat whatever you want, but only during certain hours or on certain days.

> **"IT SOUNDS SIMPLE, BUT ADHERENCE TO A DIET IS THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS."**
>
> —DAVID PROLOGO, MD

Breaking It Down

First, a little lingo. Intermittent fasting is an umbrella term for a way of eating that involves some fasting combined with what's called *ad libitum* eating. It means eating at your pleasure (not restricting calories). For the purposes of this issue, IF includes the following:

Time Restricted Eating or Feeding (TRE or TRF) You chow down during a set number of hours per day (anywhere from 12 hours to four hours, although in this issue we'll focus mainly on an eight-hour eating window, since that's more doable for beginners). During the rest of the day (12 to 20 hours or more) you fast (water, tea, coffee and seltzer are allowed as long as they're calorie-free).

5:2 You eat normally five days a week and fast for two nonconsecutive days a week. This "fast" is a little more lenient as you can have 25% of your normal daily calories on a fast day (or about 500 calories), if you choose to.

OMAD This acronym stands for one meal a day. That's all you eat. The rest of the hours you fast. It's fairly extreme for people who are used to eating "three squares" and some snacks each day.

There are more advanced ways of fasting, like fasting every other day, but we won't get into those in much detail in this issue. For specifics on all these approaches, turn to Section 2, beginning on page 38.

As you can see, it all comes down to choosing between eating less 24/7 or eating whatever you want during fewer hours. "For many people, that's an important difference," says Stephanie Clarke, MS, RDN, a Washington, D.C.-area dietitian. (See her fasting-friendly, low-calorie snacks on page 45.) “Being able to eat whatever you want, just within a limited period, feels much more doable than constantly watching what you’re eating.” Of course, it may be a bit of a distinction without a difference. IF can be beneficial for weight loss mainly because by limiting the hours you eat, you naturally limit the calories you’re consuming, although technically you could eat your day’s worth of calories in your eating window.

If weight loss—and better health—are your goal, then you want to ensure you’re skipping junk food and empty calories during your feeding window and loading up on nutritious options instead. For more weight loss, limit the calories you’re eating during your window to 1,200 to 1,500.

Facts on Fasting

While typical calorie-restriction diets just cut back on calories, intermittent fasting has more method to the madness. It targets the type of fuel you’re burning in particular. It also improves overall metabolic functioning—the way your body works—which includes things like glucose control and insulin sensitivity, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

“Intermittent fasting causes your body to preferentially burn fat,” says David Prologo, MD, a board-certified obesity medicine physician in Atlanta and an associate professor of radiology at Emory University, who has been researching various weight loss methods for the past 15 years. “It also improves insulin resistance and alters your gut microbes. When you send the message to your body that food might be scarce [during the fasting times], the biome reorganizes for efficiency. That’s one difference between people who are overweight and those people who are already lean. One [body] is efficient and one is not. IF seeks to change them to be more efficient.”

You have to burn 3,500 more calories than you consume to lose a pound.

While research hasn’t shown that IF is better than other types of calorie restriction for losing weight, it does have one advantage, says Prologo. “The key to success in dieting and weight loss is adherence, and a recent study found that people doing IF seem to be more likely to adhere to it than those who are just following normal calorie restriction.” That’s important since any diet is only as good as your ability to stick with it.

Here’s another import perk to IF. In a review of 19 studies, published in 2020 in the journal *Nutrients*, people doing IF—especially those who were overweight or obese—lost weight and spared muscle while improving blood pressure, blood sugar and triglyceride levels. The researchers looked more closely at the study subjects and found that those who were metabolically healthy to start with did not lose weight with time-restricted eating, but did lose fat. That’s a big deal since if you lose muscle as you lose weight, you’re shooting yourself in the foot because your metabolism will slow even more than it normally would. Those subjects who were metabolically unhealthy at the beginning lost significant weight. The study authors concluded that time-restricted eating is better for weight loss than restricting calories.

Flip the Switch

THE BENEFITS OF IF derive primarily from a concept known as the metabolic switch, says David Prologo, MD. You’re going from using primarily glucose for energy (which you get by breaking down stores of glycogen in the liver) to using fatty acids and ketones. So instead of storing fat, you’re using it to power your activities: It’s the Holy Grail of weight loss. “We want to preferentially lose that weight by metabolizing fat,” not muscle, says Prologo. IF can be like liposuction in diet form.

ACCORDING TO RESEARCH, this process generally kicks in about 12 hours after you stop eating, depending on how much glucose you had on board in the liver and on your activity level. So if you’re fasting, a morning workout could speed the process along, as long as it’s not too extended or too intense. (Turn to page 32 to find out more on how to adjust your exercise routine if you’re fasting.)

As you keep reading, we’ll dive deeper into the benefits of intermittent fasting, who should avoid it, how to exercise when you’re doing it and how to eat so you don’t feel super-deprived. While it takes some getting used to, you’ll find that living by the clock is much easier than it sounds.

Janet Lee is an editor and writer in Kansas City, Missouri.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF FASTING

Here's what the science says about how skipping meals for many hours at a time can be a boon for your body and mind.

by **ELIZABETH MILLARD**

WHETHER YOU CALL it time-restricted eating or intermittent fasting, the practice of going for a block of time without food, and doing that on a consistent basis for at least a few weeks, has inspired numerous researchers to investigate one big question: Does it really improve your health?

According to a number of studies, the answer seems to be yes. Although more research is needed to pin down all the physiological mechanisms that make this strategy beneficial—and especially whether it works long-term, and *if* people can manage to maintain it long-term—here's a sampling of what researchers have discovered so far.

Yes, you *can* build muscle while doing intermittent fasting.

1 It May Help You Live Longer

Restrict your eating, lengthen your life? The evidence for the fountain-of-youth effect is promising, according to researcher Mark Mattson, PhD, an adjunct professor of neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore. He looked at numerous intermittent fasting plans and concluded that two in particular are especially effective: restricting your eating time to a six- to eight-hour window every day (that's either 18:6 or 16:8), or a technique called 5:2 fasting that involves eating normally five days a week and then eating only one moderate-size meal two days a week.

Publishing the results in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 2019, Mattson noted that people who followed these plans showed improvement in blood pressure regulation, resting heart rate, blood sugar regulation, inflammation and overall resistance to stress. "Taken together, it's not hard to see why results like that might lead to a longer lifespan," he says. "The more that evidence like this builds up, the more it feels like a transition point for intermittent fasting from an interesting personal health strategy to one that may be added to medical school curricula alongside standard advice about healthy diets and exercise."

> **"UNHEALTHY EATING HABITS KEEP CELLS FROM CLEANING HOUSE."**
>
> **—ROBERTA GOTTLIEB, MD**

Other mechanisms at play when fasting may positively impact longevity as well, including something called autophagy. Like taking out the trash, autophagy happens throughout the body. It's the process of cleaning out damaged cells so that newer, healthier cells can take their place. The more optimized this mechanism becomes, the more benefits you tend to see, says Roberta Gottlieb, MD, director of molecular cardiobiology at the Cedars-Sinai Smidt Heart Institute. A 2017 study in the journal *Cell Metabolism* compared mice who ate whatever they wanted throughout the day with a group that ate the same amount of calories but only at two distinct intervals (they fasted the rest of the time). The researchers discovered that the fasting approach turned on autophagy.

"Parts of our cells become damaged, and some of our habits can prevent the body from being able to remove these, which means that cells begin to accumulate more and more debris," she says. (Imagine your cells starting to look like the inside of a hoarder house.) Those habits include eating junk food and skimping on sleep, she says. In her research, fasting and calorie restriction as a combination can be effective for turning on the autophagy process.

2 It Helps Maintain Muscle Mass

For people who are carrying a significant amount of excess weight, simply losing pounds often results in health benefits. But a better weight loss strategy tends to be focusing on body composition, which means maintaining or increasing muscle mass and lowering body fat. Research shows this combination brings a wealth of advantages, including a lower risk of chronic diseases and better mobility as you age. (Maintaining muscle as you age also helps ward off sarcopenia, which puts you at risk for a variety of potentially fatal conditions, including falls.)

Mattson says intermittent fasting can help because at a certain point, usually after several hours without food, the body stops relying on calories taken in through food and starts burning fat instead. This process is called metabolic switching, and it can be a boon for reducing body fat overall. Studies have shown that intermittent fasting, especially time-restricted eating, spares muscle while burning fat.

"In the normal eating pattern for most Americans, we eat throughout our waking hours, including snacks, and that means the body is running on those calories, and then storing the rest in the form of glycogen [the stored form of glucose]," he says. When there continues to be an abundance of glucose getting stashed in the body for later use, it turns to fat. Without that metabolic switch, that fat often doesn't

The Perks

Fasting can decrease "bad" LDL cholesterol levels.

Multiple Health Issues, One Solution

Even though Andrea Nicholson, a fortysomething Colorado resident, is a board-certified holistic nutritionist and felt her diet was on point in terms of healthy choices, she was plagued with numerous, nagging health concerns. They included chronic bloating, frequent acne flare-ups, weight gain, daily fatigue and sore muscles, even when she hadn't worked out.

"MY DIGESTION WAS a mess and I never really felt well," she says. "When I first heard about intermittent fasting, I was fascinated because it was counter to the standard advice to eat every couple hours throughout the day. I dug into the science, listened to doctors and experts share what happens biologically, and was sold on at least giving it a try."

THAT WAS IN 2016 and she's tried various fasting styles and time frames since then. She finally hit on a combination that worked for her a few years ago, and that's when all the nagging issues began to resolve. She wasn't hungry all the time, she lost weight and kept it off, her skin cleared up and her digestion improved. Plus there was one boost she didn't anticipate at all: Her regular headaches, including migraines, simply faded away.

"I HAVE MORE energy than ever before, and I simply feel like I'm the best version of myself now," she says.

get utilized as an energy source. Mattson says that can be even more problematic when you don't exercise enough, since the fat will continue to get banked instead of burned.

Keep in mind this balance relies on restricting the time frame that you eat, not on eating fewer calories—and especially not skimping on protein—which can have a negative effect on muscle mass.

3 It Boosts Heart Health in Many Ways

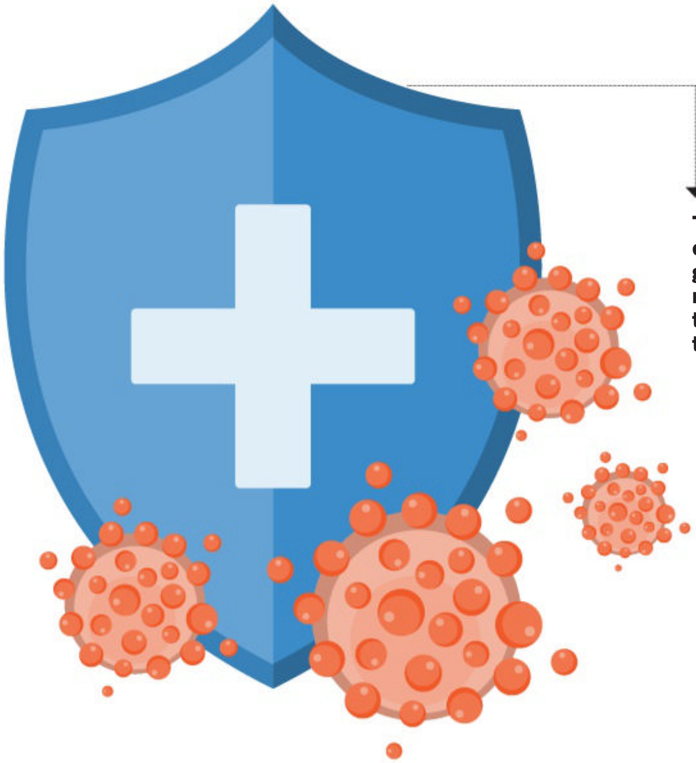
Thanks to improvements in blood pressure and blood sugar management (also known as insulin sensitivity), intermittent fasting can be beneficial for heart function, says Luiza Petre, MD, a cardiologist and assistant clinical professor of cardiology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, who practices intermittent fasting herself.

Research published in *The American Journal of Medicine* in 2021 found that time-restricted eating benefits heart health through multiple surprising mechanisms: It tends to improve the body's circadian rhythm, which in turn improves sleep. Considering that insomnia is strongly linked with higher blood pressure and heart disease risk, this is a major benefit for your ticker.

Another mechanism for improved heart health, according to the researchers, is better maintenance of antioxidant levels in the body. Antioxidants are compounds in the body that scavenge free radicals. (Think of free radicals as a bunch of marauders, running around causing all sorts of cellular damage that contributes to disease.) When there's an imbalance in antioxidants or your levels are low, that can lead to a condition called oxidative stress—those free radicals get out of control. Oxidative stress has been linked to a higher incidence of cardiovascular disease, so reducing its impact through strategies like eating healthy and exercising is important. Intermittent fasting is one more way that oxidative stress can be lowered, which not only helps your heart, but also has an impact in lowering risks for diseases such as cancer.

Although researchers are still trying to figure out how IF affects specific antioxidants, a study in *The FASEB Journal* in 2019 found that, in general, intermittent fasting increases the antioxidant capacity of plasma and decreases enzymes related to oxidation.

Preserving or adding muscle helps stoke your metabolism.



Taking an eating break gives gut microbes time to do their jobs.

“Obviously, intermittent fasting doesn’t replace managing your heart health with your healthcare team, but it may optimize heart function in a way that both prevents problems and improves any existing issues,” says Petre. “Plus, what’s good for your heart is good for the rest of your body, so this may be one strategy that has profound ripple effects across every system.”

4

It Reduces Diabetes Risk and Fine-Tunes Hunger Signals

If you already have diabetes, it’s crucial to check with your doctor first before making a major change to your diet, including trying intermittent fasting. (Turn to page 28 for more on the dangers of IF for certain populations.) However, it may be worth having that conversation: Research published in the journal *Clinical Diabetes and Endocrinology* in 2021 found ample evidence that intermittent fasting can not only reduce body weight in people with type 2 diabetes, it also decreases fasting glucose, insulin resistance (where your body becomes numb to the effects of insulin) and levels of a hormone called leptin. It’s responsible for adjusting hunger based on how much energy you have stored. When leptin production is working correctly, it tends to reduce hunger signals so you don’t overeat. That optimization can help regulate blood sugar, which leads to a range of effects like more energy and lower weight. For people with type 2 diabetes, it could also lead to less reliance on medications like insulin.

“FASTING SHOULD BE PART OF A LARGER HEALTH STRATEGY.”

—JASON FUNG, MD

All of these advantages mean time-restricted eating may be helpful for reducing diabetes risk as well, especially if you’re in the prediabetes category, says Jason Fung, MD, author of *The Complete Guide to Fasting*. Of course, that also depends on what you’re eating during your feeding window, he says. “Intermittent fasting on its own can improve factors like insulin regulation, but if you’re eating highly processed, very high-calorie foods with little nutritional benefit, you’re not going to see many improvements from simply changing your eating window,” he adds.

5

It Bolsters the Immune System

An interesting study published in *Metabolism Open* early in 2022 looked at intermittent fasters during the holy month of Ramadan—when practicing Muslims go without food from dawn to dusk—with an eye toward how it might affect the immune system and protect against COVID-19 infection. The researchers found that there were multiple mechanisms by which “fasting has the potential to optimize the immune system function…as it suppresses chronic inflammation and oxidative stress, improves metabolic profile and remodels the microbiome.” While these changes may make it easier for the body to ward off coronavirus infection, more targeted research is needed (in the meantime, all other necessary precautions should be taken). In addition, several studies have shown intermittent fasting can reduce levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines and the risk of inflammatory diseases, including heart disease, cancer and fatty liver disease, which is on the rise.

Elizabeth Millard is a Minnesota-based health writer.

Fasting can cause constipation so make sure your diet has plenty of fiber.

THE EASY WAY TO A HEALTHIER GUT

Limiting the hours you eat leads to better digestion—but that's only the beginning.

by **DEBORAH SKOLNIK**

The Perks

IF allows your gut to rest and clean out any leftovers.

MANY PEOPLE TURN to intermittent fasting to lose their "gut," but here's something you may not know: It's also a major win for the inner workings of your actual gut. Its population of good bacteria thrives during those breaks from digesting, enhancing your ability to process food. What's even more surprising is that a happier gastrointestinal system triggers other positive changes throughout your body, including reduced inflammation, a balanced immune system and even an elevated mood. Scientists are still studying the hows and whys behind these substantial benefits, but what they know so far makes intermittent fasting seem like a smarter idea than ever.

Constant Eating Causes Chaos in Your Body

When you hear the term "circadian rhythm," you probably think of the internal clock that controls when you feel alert or sleepy each day. But many systems in your body have a circadian rhythm of their own, including your gut bacteria. According to a study of mice, published in the scientific journal *Cell*, the gut's microbiome—its many microorganisms, including viruses and fungi—changes daily. Among it are trillions of diverse bacteria, peaking and dwindling at different points in a 24-hour period.

It's possible these fluctuations served an evolutionary purpose. Diverse types of bacteria in the gut, capable of shifting their composition rapidly, may have helped humans absorb nutrients from any kind of food they were lucky enough to find. Whatever the reason, your gut still works best when it maintains its daily routine.

Unfortunately, you can interrupt it by frequent eating—and too many of us do just that. "If you are always introducing calories to the GI tract, it doesn't have a chance to go through its natural rhythm," says Sheldon Zablow, MD, a San Diego-based nutritional psychiatrist and the author of *Your Vitamins Are Obsolete*. As part of the digestive process, he explains, "the small intestine pulls out nutrients [from food], but it takes many, many hours for that process to happen, and then another couple of hours for the water to be pulled out by your large intestine." When you're constantly having meals or snacks, "the gut is confused by these little pockets of food always working through your intestines... everything is thrown off schedule," Zablow says.

> "IF YOU WANT TO FAST DAILY, IT SHOULD BE FOR 12 TO 16 HOURS, TOPS."
>
> —NUTRITIONAL RESEARCHER BRAD PILON

Kimchi contains bacteria that may help enhance the immune system.

Among other problems, your gut's mix of bacteria is altered. The bad bacteria are less efficient at facilitating digestion, so they create harmful compounds in the body and rapidly proliferate as a result of being constantly fed. Yes, the good bacteria are fed, too, but the effects on them are far less dramatic. "The good bacteria are more efficient, so they don't need as many calories, and they don't need calories all the time to grow," Zablow explains.

As the proportion of bad bacteria in the intestines increases, digestion worsens. Your gut stops absorbing nutrients as well, and bowel movements become irregular. A 2014 review of research into the link between gut bacteria and health, published in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, linked a bacteria imbalance with bloating, abdominal pain and diarrhea. In addition, the study noted that if a person has an abundance of bad intestinal bacteria, they're more likely to have health problems, including inflammatory bowel diseases, obesity and certain cancers.

Give Your Gut a Break

Clearly, constant noshing puts a burden on your belly. But if you think intermittent fasting sounds like the opposite extreme, a marathon of hunger, you'd be mistaken, says nutritional researcher Brad Pilon of Dundas, Ontario, Canada, author of *Eat Stop Eat*, one of the first books detailing the benefits of intermittent fasting. "Fasting is something you don't do all the time," he explains. "It's just a way to occasionally take a break and let your body settle down from the eating process. The goal is never to see how long you can go without food."

As your digestive system takes a rest, its bacterial composition shifts in a positive direction, Pilon says. "You're looking at altered ratios of bacteroides [which are beneficial for digestion] and firmicutes [linked to problems, including weight gain and type 2 diabetes]," he says. The proportion of "good" bacteria grows in relation to the latter.

Several studies of Muslims who observe Ramadan, a holy month during which they fast from dawn to sunset, found they had increased levels of good gut bacteria such as *Faecalibacterium*, *Roseburia* and *Akkermansia*. A 2019 overview of 31 scientific studies (20 involving animals, 11 on humans), published in the journal *Nutrients*, found that periodic fasting led to greater numbers of other good bacteria, including *Bifidobacterium* and *Lactobacillus*.

Not only does digestion become more efficient, but as intermittent fasting becomes a long-term habit, it may decrease your urge to overeat. "Bacteria in your gut communicate directly with your body...they have an effect on a myriad of different hormones that are responsible for weight maintenance, your ability to switch back and forth between hunger and fed states, and even your sense of hunger," Pilon explains. "You want the beneficial sort of [bacterial] set-up where your gut isn't driving you to overeat." You, not your belly. wants to be in the driver's seat.

In addition to fasting, it's also smart to consume a variety of bug-friendly foods during your eating window. Fermented foods, such as kimchi, yogurt and tempeh (a fermented soy product) are packed with probiotics, or good bacteria, says Zablow. Tempeh also contains prebiotics, which are types of fiber that spur your digestive system's good bacteria to grow. And if you're looking for a nibble that will put you in good spirits, try dark chocolate. Honest: Science is telling you to. In 2021, a study published in the *Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry* shared that people who ate 30 grams (about 1 ounce) of dark chocolate every day for a three-week period saw an increase in *Blautia obeum*, a gut microbe that improves mood.

Inflammatory Evidence

Fasting doesn't just improve your mix of gut bacteria. It can also reduce inflammation throughout the body, says Benjamin D. Horne, PhD, a cardiovascular and genetic epidemiologist at Intermountain Heart Institute in Salt Lake City, Utah, and a clinical associate professor affiliated with the cardiovascular division at Stanford University Medical School in California. When you fast, he says, "The body thinks that you're at risk of dying, so it tries to optimize all sorts of different functions so it's able to continue living until food sources become available."

One change is that your body's inflammatory response to chronic diseases and acute infections is decreased, Horne says. The increased levels of good bacteria during fasting are thought to play an integral role in this shift, though the mechanism isn't understood. "Maybe the good bacteria themselves are less likely to cause inflammation, or they are producing proteins that help reduce inflammation, or produce proteins that help the body trigger some other process to do it," Horne speculates. "Certainly, a more efficient processing of food that's in the gut at the time that food becomes scarce would be one reason."

There's a ready explanation for why the body strives to reduce inflammation during fasting, Horne adds: to preserve resources. "It requires more energy to create the proteins that are involved in response to inflammation. The body is using more energy to protect itself from the inflammation and to try to reduce it," he says.

Downshifting the inflammatory response can lead to improved overall health. "A message I want to get out to people is for more physicians and lay people to think about chronic inflammation as the universal illness," says Zablow. "Nine out of 10 of the leading causes of disability and death have an underlying basis of inflammation. You look at it with cancer, diabetes, dementia, heart disease—the basis for all of them is chronic inflammation."

This Is Your Belly Fat on Intermittent Fasting

GOT A LITTLE jiggle around your middle? When you practice intermittent fasting, the belly is one of the first areas where fat starts to disappear, says author Brad Pilon. Its cells have receptors that make them especially sensitive to hormones and molecules that are released during fasting.

ONE OF THESE hormones, he says, is growth hormone. "Because of its name, you assume it [only leads to] growth, but it also tells your fat cells it's time to release their fat stores," he explains. "It in effect says, 'OK, we're going to break up some of that. We need to use it for energy.'"

GROWTH HORMONE PEAKS around the 14- to 16-hour mark of a fast, he adds. "It not only prevents your muscle from being used as fuel, but drives your fat to be used as fuel." The effects are gradual, but if you stick with it, you'll be able to button your jeans more easily in several weeks.

An Immune Booster?

There's a growing body of evidence that intermittent fasting can help spur the immune system. A 2014 study, published in the journal *Cell Stem Cell*, found that cycles of fasting promoted the regeneration of immune cells as well as the activation of stem cells. The latter act as anti-inflammatory agents, while also promoting tissue regeneration and healing. Other research has shown that a reduced calorie intake (say, a 50% reduction) may be more effective than water-only fasting at enhancing immune function.

At any rate, fasting's positive benefits for the gut and body are definitely food for thought.

Deborah Skolnik writes about health and parenting in New York.

The Perks

You may need fewer drugs to counter inflammation.

7 MYTHS

BUSTED!

It's one of the hottest eating patterns around these days, but fallacies about intermittent fasting abound. Not for long!

by KAREN ASP

AMERICANS HAVE BEEN trying different ways to shed pounds for decades, but only in recent years have they latched onto intermittent fasting. In fact, in 2020, intermittent fasting overtook “clean eating” as the most popular diet in this country, according to the International Food Information Council’s 2020 Food and Health Survey.

There are several types of intermittent fasting. There’s the 5:2 approach, where you fast for two nonconsecutive days a week, say Monday and Wednesday. Then there’s alternate-day fasting—not super beginner friendly—where you flip-flop between eating normally one day and skipping meals the next. Another approach, and arguably the most popular, is called time-restricted eating, where you eat only during a specified time period, say noon to 8 p.m., and then fast the rest of the time. You might do a 16:8 fast where you’re fasting for 16 hours and eating for eight hours or a 14:10 fast where you’re fasting for 14 hours and eating for 10 (it’s a good way to ease into fasting).

The Perks

Use nutrient- and fiber-rich produce to fill up and stay satisfied.

The Perks

You may have more energy for exercise when you're fasting.

Still, any time there's a popular diet, there are bound to be many myths surrounding it, and fasting certainly isn't immune to that, especially since it goes against our "food is everywhere, all the time" culture. Below, we asked the experts to clarify some misconceptions about intermittent fasting so you can make the most of your fasting experience.

MYTH #1

Intermittent Fasting Is Best for Weight Loss

THE TRUTH

While intermittent fasting has been shown to be as effective for weight loss as other diets, "current research doesn't show that it's better than other calorie-restriction plans," says Angela Fitch, MD, co-director of Massachusetts General Hospital Weight Center in Boston, faculty at Harvard Medical School and chair of Jenny Craig's science advisory board. Yet it does have some advantages over other diets, one being that you don't have to completely change your eating habits like you do on other plans, since intermittent fasting is more about when you're eating versus what you're eating.

If you struggle with calorie-restriction in general, where you're forced to count calories, intermittent fasting could have an edge, says Krista Varady, PhD, professor of nutrition at the University of Illinois in Chicago who frequently busts fasting myths on her Instagram account (@drkristavarady). Weight loss as a result of fasting can also lead to reduced blood pressure and improved insulin sensitivity so you can manage your blood sugar better, which reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. In the calorie-restriction studies Varady's run, people frequently get burned out after a month or two of counting calories. Yet when they do intermittent fasting, they have greater success sticking with it.

MYTH #2

You Can't Get Enough Nutrients if You Fast

THE TRUTH

Getting ample nutrition can be harder when you're fasting, especially if your diet is loaded with junk food, but that doesn't mean it can't be done. "It's harder only because you're collapsing the

> ×
>
> "THERE'S NO RULE THAT SAYS YOU HAVE TO EAT BREAKFAST TO BE HEALTHY."
>
> —ALIX TUROFF, MS, RD

window in which you're eating," says dietitian Alix Turoff, MS, RD, CDN, who's also a certified personal trainer in Brooklyn, New York. Yet if you do fasting correctly and focus on healthy, nutritious foods, you should be able to eat a balanced diet, consuming all of the essential nutrients that your body needs. The only exception, albeit a rare one? If you're an Olympic athlete like Michael Phelps who needs to eat thousands of calories a day, fasting could be tough, she adds.

MYTH #3

You Can't Exercise When You're Fasting

THE TRUTH

Your body does get energy from the food you eat, but it's not out of the question to exercise while fasting, especially if eating beforehand causes gastrointestinal issues when you're physically active. "I know many runners who like to run when they're fasted because they don't get cramps," Varady says. In fact, exercising during your fasting window may actually give you energy, especially if you're doing alternate-day fasting. In studies Varady has conducted, people who combined alternate-day fasting with exercise usually pick fasting days to exercise. "They say they actually get a boost of energy from fasting," she says.

That being said, if you're training for an event like a marathon or century ride, it might be wise to wait until after the event to fast so that your body always has enough fuel on board, especially for longer training sessions, Turoff says. If you do want to try to make it work during your training, just make sure that your feeding window aligns with your workouts and you schedule your longer workouts for later in the day. (To learn more about how to maximize your workouts and your intermittent fasting, turn to page 32.)

MYTH #4

Fasting Will Extend Your Life

THE TRUTH

You've probably heard that fasting can boost your longevity. And there is some research to back it. Take, for instance, University of Southern California researcher Valter Longo, PhD, who's promoting a type of fasting in which you limit your eating to a 12-hour window every day (doesn't seem too hard, right?). A study in the journal *Cell* that he co-authored suggests that eating mostly plant-based foods while following this "fasting-mimicking" diet can lead to numerous benefits, including weight loss and a longer life. But don't get your hopes up—at least not yet. "We currently don't have human data on longevity to say one way or another," Dr. Fitch says. "Most of the [existing] data is theoretical based on animal models." That's because human longevity studies are costly and require at least 10 years, but those studies are currently underway so keep an eye out. (For more on how fasting can potentially reduce your risk of chronic health conditions, which could in turn lengthen your life, turn to page 12.)

MYTH #5

You'll Lose Muscle if You're Doing Intermittent Fasting

THE TRUTH

If you're getting enough protein, known as the building block of muscle, in your diet, this shouldn't

Intermittent Fasting and Your Metabolism

THERE'S A COMMON misconception that fasting can screw up your metabolism, but that's not accurate. For starters, understand that whenever you lose weight, your metabolic rate will naturally go down. "Weight loss causes your body to slow its energy burning to conserve energy and prevent further weight loss," says Angela Fitch, MD. Your body's simply trying to defend or protect against weight loss, which is one reason it's so hard to lose weight and keep it off.

PLUS, NO MATTER what diet you follow, if you're losing weight, about 75% of that loss comes from fat, the other 25% from muscle. As a result, "your calorie needs will drop by 100 to 200 calories per day, but that's no different for intermittent fasting than any other diet," says Krista Varady, PhD. Eating enough protein and doing strength training can help stanch this loss, Dr. Fitch says.

YET THERE ARE studies to show that short-term fasting like time-restricted eating, where you're fasting for only half the day, can change how your insulin levels affect your body fat regulation, although exactly how that impacts your metabolism is something researchers are still teasing out, Fitch says. There's also a possible rise in the neurotransmitter norepinephrine, which may promote fat burning. Fasting might even increase the number and health of your mitochondria, which will allow your body to burn more energy, she adds.

be an issue, Fitch says. The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of protein is 0.36 grams of protein per pound of body weight, but because she says the RDA represents the bare minimum to avoid deficiency—and doesn't take into account special populations, like seniors or people trying to lose weight—Turoff recommends getting 0.7 to 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight for most people. And make sure you're getting enough carbohydrates or else your body eventually may start breaking down muscle for fuel, she adds.

MYTH #6

Fasting Gives You Brain Fog

THE TRUTH

This might depend more on you than the diet itself. "When you fast, your body makes ketones as it burns fat, and many people experience increased mental focus with ketone bodies in their blood," Fitch says. In fact, better concentration is one of the reasons fasting may have become so popular with high-level executives in Silicon Valley. Of course, there is a small adjustment period. You might feel tired and brain fogged for the first 10 days. But that should disappear after you adjust, Varady says.

MYTH #7

Skipping Breakfast Is Unhealthy

THE TRUTH

No doubt you've heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and studies show that's true for certain populations like school-age children. "Breakfast improves their concentration and focus," Turoff says. For other individuals, though, research about the exact benefits of breakfast have been inconclusive. While some studies do show that people who eat breakfast have a lower risk of obesity and weight gain, other studies suggest breakfast doesn't have an impact. That's why Turoff says whether you eat or skip breakfast is such an individual thing.

Many people who do intermittent fasting, especially if they're following a 16:8 fast, are often choosing to eat between 12 p.m. and 8 p.m. so they can eat dinner with their family or friends, Varady says. While some people will have trouble not eating until noon if they wake up early, Varady allows fasters to sip tea and coffee with a little sugar and a bit of cream in the morning to hold them over. Just pay attention to your body. As long as you're not completely starving and counting the hours until lunch, you should be fine skipping breakfast, Turoff says.

Bottom line? There's nothing magical about fasting, and while it can work for some people, it may not be for everybody and that's OK. The same holds true for virtually any diet. "Fasting likely has human health benefits and allowing your body a rest from eating, especially at night, can be beneficial," Fitch says. "But if it's hard for you and leads to an increase in your stress level, then it's not right for you." Instead, do a type of natural fasting that nutrition experts have been advocating for years: Close your kitchen after dinner and don't open it until your first meal the next day.

Karen Asp is an award-winning writer based in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

> **"IF FASTING CAUSES YOU MORE STRESS THAN BENEFITS, IT'S NOT RIGHT FOR YOU."**
>
> —ANGELA FITCH, MD

Cleaner blood from fasting makes for clearer thinking.

The protein and veggies in this dish will keep you feeling full.

WHEN TO OPT OUT

For many people, IF isn't a good fit.

by **ELIZABETH MILLARD**

ALTHOUGH THE METABOLIC changes that intermittent fasting can spur are all healthy, going long periods without eating or strictly controlling your intake can be bad for some people. “There is no one-size-fits-all or blanket dietary recommendations that can be made for all people, and that includes intermittent fasting,” says Dana Ellis Hunnes, PhD, RD, senior dietitian at UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles and author of *Recipe for Survival*. “What may be very helpful to one person may not work for another.” Although determining if fasting is a good fit often comes down to how it affects you on an individual level—through trial and error—there are some general categories of people who may want to think twice before jumping on the bandwagon.

SKIP IT WHEN

You Have a History of Eating Disorders

Simply having disordered behavior around eating in your past doesn’t automatically mean you shouldn’t do intermittent fasting, but if you try the eating style, it’s very important to be aware of whether you’re adjusting other factors—specifically, those behaviors you’ve overcome, according to Hunnes.

Intuitive eating may be a better method for those in recovery from an eating disorder than intermittent fasting.

Many seniors already stop eating early, so IF could be a good fit *if* the rest of your diet is solid.

"With intermittent fasting, many people also tend to reduce calories at the same time," she says. This isn't a requirement for fasting, but it can happen naturally because of the smaller time frame in which you're eating during the day. "Unfortunately, people who have a history of eating disorders may begin to use fasting as a way to revisit slashing their calories." That can be especially problematic if fasting is used as an excuse to keep reducing consumption.

If you have a history of this type of disorder but want to try intermittent fasting anyway, Hunnes suggests doing meal planning in advance and ensuring you're getting enough calories even with a smaller eating time frame.

SKIP IT WHEN You're a Kid

Because research on the effects of fasting in children is limited—and the studies that do exist have inconsistent results—the current recommendation is that IF isn't a good approach for children and adolescents, according to Leah Blalock, RD, pediatric dietitian at Children's Health of Orange County in California. "Kids and teens are in periods of rapid growth and as such, have very specific needs in terms of calories, which may not get met with fasting," she states. "A better approach is to emphasize intentional eating, such as having planned meals and snacks at certain times throughout the day to help manage hunger and portion control."

Also, children can be at higher risk for problems from fasting because of their smaller size and increased metabolic needs, adds Omar Jaber, MD, attending physician with the Children's National Health System in Washington, DC, and Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington. Those issues can include fatigue, weakness and irritability. He adds that children have been shown to have decreased cognitive function even with short fasts.

SKIP IT WHEN You're Pregnant or Breastfeeding

When Hunnes was pregnant, she remembers being nauseous the entire time, not just in the first trimester, and it was a challenge to get enough nutrients and calories. If she'd cut the time frame for eating, she suspects that would have been even tougher.

"Even if you're not struggling with nausea, it can still be hard to get all the nutrients you need when you're pregnant, and attempting to get those and the right amount of calories into just a couple of meals per day is definitely not recommended."

The same goes for breastfeeding, she adds. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, breastfeeding moms need more calories to meet their nutritional needs, often about 300 to 500 calories more per day than they would have otherwise. Adding that amount on top of regular needs, and then squishing it all into a shorter time frame—especially when you don't know exactly when you'll be breastfeeding (since baby rules the clock), Hunnes adds—can put you at risk of falling short of needed energy.

What about if you're trying to get pregnant? That depends on your situation. For example, a 2016 study in

Even if you don't restrict eating times, noshing too close to bedtime can cause reflux.

the *Journal of Mid-Life Health* found that women who have polycystic ovary syndrome, or PCOS, saw an increase in their levels of luteinizing hormone—which plays a key role in ovulation—through fasting. The same study noted that for those without PCOS, fasting may be beneficial for fertility if it leads to a reduction in excess weight, since that can have an effect on reproductive health overall. If you're working with a reproductive endocrinologist, check with them to see if it could be helping or hindering your efforts to conceive.

SKIP IT WHEN

You're an Older Adult With Taste or Digestion Issues

If you're over age 65, you may find that fasting is a great fit for an overall healthy lifestyle—but that's often true only if there aren't confounding variables, says Hunnes. If fasting causes you to lower your calorie intake, for example, that could be problematic.

"Older adults already have difficulty getting nutrients and enough total calories due to loss of smell and taste, digestive issues and lack of hunger signals," Hunnes says. "Adding one more factor that can lower nutrient intake isn't usually a good idea."

SINCE IF CAN ALTER HORMONE FUNCTIONING, IT MAY INTERFERE WITH EFFORTS TO CONCEIVE.

Older adults who aren't eating enough—especially adequate protein—are at higher risk for sarcopenia, which is the age-related loss of muscle mass. That can affect a range of issues like mobility, strength and even longevity.

Another tricky aspect to consider with IF can be medication use. There are several drugs—such as some types of antibiotics, aspirin, anti-inflammatory drugs or metformin for diabetes, among others—that must be taken with food to prevent stomach upset. According to the CDC, about 22% of people over age 80 take five or more prescription medications regularly. It can be a lot to coordinate medications with your eating window.

SKIP IT WHEN

You Feel Bad Doing It

No matter what combination of time frames you attempt, if it seems like IF makes you feel ravenous, irritable and exhausted or gives you headaches, it could mean fasting is simply not your groove. In addition to these, you could experience side effects like:

- Digestive upset
- Lack of focus or concentration
- Light-headedness
- Difficulty sleeping soundly
- Intense cravings
- Anxiety

Some problems, like irritability and trouble concentrating, are usually temporary as your body adjusts, according to Jason Fung, MD, author of *The Complete Guide to Fasting*. One way to speed the transition is make sure you're getting enough calories, he suggests. "If you're cutting way back on how much you eat, it's more likely to backfire, especially in the beginning," he says. "That also puts you at higher risk for swinging the other way and bingeing during your eating window."

However, if your calories are at the appropriate level and you're still struggling, stop fasting to see if the issues resolve. If they do, fasting may not be for you, says Dr. Fung. Or you could try shortening your fasting time frame to a 12:12 plan.

As with any shift if you have a chronic condition or concerns about your health, talk with your doctor first to make sure fasting will be helpful instead of harmful.

What if You Have Diabetes?

ALTHOUGH IT MAY seem like intermittent fasting isn't a good idea for those with diabetes since it could make it harder to regulate your blood sugar, studies indicate the opposite may be true. A research review on the effects of fasting for people with type 2 diabetes, published in *Clinical Diabetes and Endocrinology* in 2021, showed that the majority of studies indicated positive outcomes, including reduced body weight, decreased fasting glucose, decreased fasting insulin and less insulin resistance. The researchers noted that some patients were able to reverse their need for insulin therapy during intermittent fasting; this result is compelling enough to suggest physicians should discuss fasting with their patients who have type 2 diabetes.

PEOPLE WITH TYPE 1 diabetes will need to adjust their insulin dosing, which should be done with your doctor's supervision. No matter what kind of diabetes you have, always check with your doctor before starting a new diet or eating style and report any problems.

EXERCISING ON EMPTY

Logging a morning sweat before eating is certainly trendy, but it may not help you burn more fat.

by **KAREN ASP**

WORKING OUT IN the morning has its advantages. For one thing, you're more likely to log a sweat if you schedule it in the morning versus after work. Another advantage: It may help you become more consistent with your workouts.

Trouble is, eating around morning workouts can be tricky, and because of that, you might be tempted to exercise on an empty stomach. Maybe you're even intentionally exercising in a fasted state because you've heard it can burn more fat. But don't buy into that urban myth. There's more to exercising in a fasted state than you think, and if fat burning and fitness matter to you, you might want to reconsider.

Exercising on empty is no doubt trendy, with many people believing that it can help them burn more fat, and even drop weight as a result. In fact, that's probably the No. 1 reason people exercise in a fasted state, which generally means that you've gone at least eight or more hours without food. "That's usually enough time for your body's liver glycogen stores to become depleted and muscle glycogen to be at its lowest levels," says Stephanie Hnatiuk, RD, a dietitian and personal trainer/running coach in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, who specializes in performance nutrition for runners and other athletes. She adds that it's possible fasting for as little as four hours could put you in the same low-glycogen state.

Carbs break down quickly, which is why your body taps them during intense workouts.

"IF WORKING OUT ON AN EMPTY STOMACH FEELS GOOD TO YOU, THEN DO IT."

—ANGELA FITCH, MD

Glycogen is your body's primary source of fuel, so it seems to make sense that in its absence, your body will naturally turn to burning fat instead. And theoretically, "if you exercise in a fasted state, it could potentially increase the amount of fat burning, which is called lipolysis," says Angela Fitch, MD, codirector of Massachusetts General Hospital Weight Center in Boston, faculty at Harvard Medical School and chair of Jenny Craig's science advisory board. The caveat, though? Studies that support this are based on animal, not human, subjects and many of the studies on exercise and fasting are done with trained athletes who are metabolically different from people who have weight issues, she adds.

There are also several flaws with the idea that exercising while fasted is an effective way to burn fat. For starters, "you can't change the type of fuel your body is using during exercise," Hnatiuk says.

It's true that while you're resting or exercising at a lower intensity, your body will primarily burn fat for fuel because of the workout's aerobic nature. As your exercise intensity increases, like when you go from a walk to a slow jog, your body transitions to burning more carbohydrates for energy. Carbohydrates are broken down more quickly and give your working muscles a faster energy source, Hnatiuk says.

As you pick up even more speed, perhaps breaking into a fast run or doing interval training in a cycling class, your need for

Aim to drink a cup of water every 15 minutes during a session.

carbohydrates increases. “When you’re exercising at your highest intensity, you’re predominantly using carbohydrates for fuel,” she says. “That’s something you can’t change.”

> **“FOOD PROVIDES THE ENERGY FOR HARDER WORKOUTS.”**
>
> **—STEPHANIE HNATIUK, RD**

So what happens if you don’t have enough carbohydrates on board? This is where it gets interesting, as you will lose weight, but it’s the wrong kind of weight loss. “You’ll be losing muscle, which is the exact thing needed for staying healthy as well as optimizing fat loss,” says Christopher Mohr, PhD, RD, a Louisville, Kentucky-based sports dietitian, nutrition consultant and NOW Foods Wellness expert.

That’s because without enough carbohydrate stores, your body will create new glucose (sugar) molecules out of other substrates, primarily amino acids from protein. This process, which takes place in the liver, is called gluconeogenesis, and there’s a reason you don’t want this to happen. “These amino acids will come from your body’s muscle stores, which can lead to a worsening of body composition and muscle loss over time,” Hnatiuk says.

Deflating Performance

Just as your car needs gas to run, your body needs food to perform, and another negative of exercising on an empty stomach is that it will likely reduce or impair your physical performance. “Without enough energy available to meet your training demands, your workout quality will suffer,” Hnatiuk says. You won’t be able to lift as much, run as fast or train as hard or as long. In fact, “you’ll have a tough time doing vigorous exercise because of the lack of immediate fuel,” Mohr says.

Plus, you might not feel well while you’re exercising, which can obviously affect your performance. Negative side effects from exercising while fasted include dizziness, weakness and nausea, the result of low blood sugar during your training or a lack of fuel in your muscles, Hnatiuk says.

Should You Try It?

Mohr doesn’t recommend exercising on an empty stomach for anybody. “Research has shown that your workouts are more effective with food because of the energy food gives you, which means you can do harder workouts and get more benefits,” he says.

There are also people who just shouldn’t do it, including those who want to improve their performance or body composition, women who are pregnant and individuals who have diabetes or high blood pressure, Hnatiuk says.

Yet some people can do relatively well exercising while fasted, including those who experience gastrointestinal issues like cramping and nausea if they eat too close to training. “As long as you feel well while you’re exercising fasted, I don’t discourage it,” Fitch says.

Just follow a few simple guidelines. First, fuel up well the night before so you can optimize your muscle and liver glycogen stores as much as possible, Hnatiuk says. “Even if your eating window stops at 8 p.m., you should be fine.” Then make sure you’re hydrating before and during your workout, something that becomes even more important when you’re exercising fasted. “The more hydrated you are, the better your body will perform,” Fitch says.

After your workout, combine protein and carbohydrates (like a protein shake with fruit) to refuel and replenish your muscle and liver glycogen stores, switching your eating window closer to your workout. “Because glycogen uptake in your muscle cells is optimal immediately post-exercise, arrange your post-workout nutrition to be within an hour of finishing a training session,” Hnatiuk says.

Choose your workouts wisely, too. While you’ll probably be OK doing short and/or low-intensity workouts like a gentle yoga class, doing more intense exercise, especially if it’s longer than 30 minutes, can be tough while fasted, Hnatiuk says.

There is no doubt that fasting alone comes with health benefits. But exercising on empty? The jury’s still out on this one.

How IF Gives This Exerciser the Edge

RENATA CASTRO IS no stranger to diets. From low carb to low fat, she had tried them all, until a little more than three years ago when her endocrinologist recommended that she do intermittent fasting. “After the birth of my daughter, my doctor suggested doing IF to tame my out-of-control weight and hormonal imbalances,” says the 40-year-old resident of Coral Springs, Florida, who was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome at the age of 15.

HER ENDOCRINOLOGIST WAS right. By initiating a time-restricted fasting schedule where she eats for eight hours starting at noon, then fasts for 16 hours, she dropped 80 pounds in a year without any other lifestyle changes. She says the schedule is easy to maintain, even though as an immigration attorney, she travels frequently. “I’ve learned to go out with people and not feel tempted to eat because others are eating,” she says.

SURPRISINGLY, HER FASTING hasn’t interfered with her workouts, which she prefers to do at 6 a.m. In fact, in spite of what the experts in this article say, she believes her diet is giving her fitness a boost. “As long as I’m not at the tail end of my fasting window, I actually perform better, especially during cardio workouts, when fasted,” she says.

FOR CASTRO, THIS style of eating has changed her life. “Even though I love to eat, I no longer live around food,” she says. “Prior to fasting, if I hadn’t eaten breakfast, it would have been hard for me to function, but now I’m more productive and feel more alive.”

The Perks

It’s easy to switch your eating window to match your workout routine.

part

2

BY THE NUMBERS

There are different ways to fast, but it all comes down to picking a plan that works with your lifestyle.

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HOW TO DO IT

TIME-RESTRICTED EATING

Going without doesn’t have to be intimidating with this flexible approach to eating.

by **JANET LEE**

The Perks

If can help you nix late-night noshing.

FASTING BRINGS UP images of starving yourself for days but in reality, it's a well-researched approach to eating that has significant physiological benefits. The easiest type of fasting is known as time restricted eating (TRE). In this approach, you simply narrow the time you eat during the day from 16 or 18 hours or more to something more like eight to 12.

"My preference for IF is the timed IF where you have a certain time period in the day, every day, in which to eat," says Stephanie Clarke, MS, RDN, a Washington, D.C.-area dietitian. "That way you don't have days where you have severe restriction. With most people's lifestyles, that's harder to do. A lot of people can go until noon and cut their eating off at 8 p.m. It tends to be easier to get your nutrients in and keep track of, too."

Determine what your weakest diet link is and see if IF can help.

Research has shown that this way of eating improves all sorts of metabolic factors, like blood pressure, inflammation, cholesterol, insulin sensitivity and resistance and blood sugar levels. It gives your digestion time to clean up and reset itself and also preferentially targets adipose tissue (aka fat) as fuel, so think of all that "gas" for your daily activities and workouts coming directly from your fat reserves.

Here's how to make this approach work for you.

1

Figure Out Your Ratios

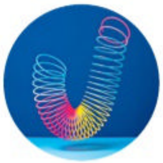
By now you've seen the numbers: 12:12, 14:10, 16:8. (Why there seems to be a bias against odd numbers is a mystery!) That ratio is the amount of time you're fasting compared to the amount of time you're eating, with the total being 24 hours. Can you eat for just eight hours and not be miserable for the other 16? Do your work hours make it hard to eat earlier? "Most people I talk to who've tried IF are opting for 16:8," says Dana White, MS, RD, ATC, a sports dietitian and associate clinical faculty at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. "It seems to be a more popular way to go. The hours are a little more in line with their lifestyle, more or less."

2

Decide on Your Window

That leads us to figuring out when your feeding window will be. Most people fast overnight because it's easy. You're asleep so there's eight hours (give or take) where you don't have to think about the ice cream you're missing. If you work until 6 or 7 p.m., you may want to eat when you get home and then fast until midday the next day. If you prefer a morning workout, especially if you want to fuel higher-intensity or longer workouts, you can move your window earlier in the day.

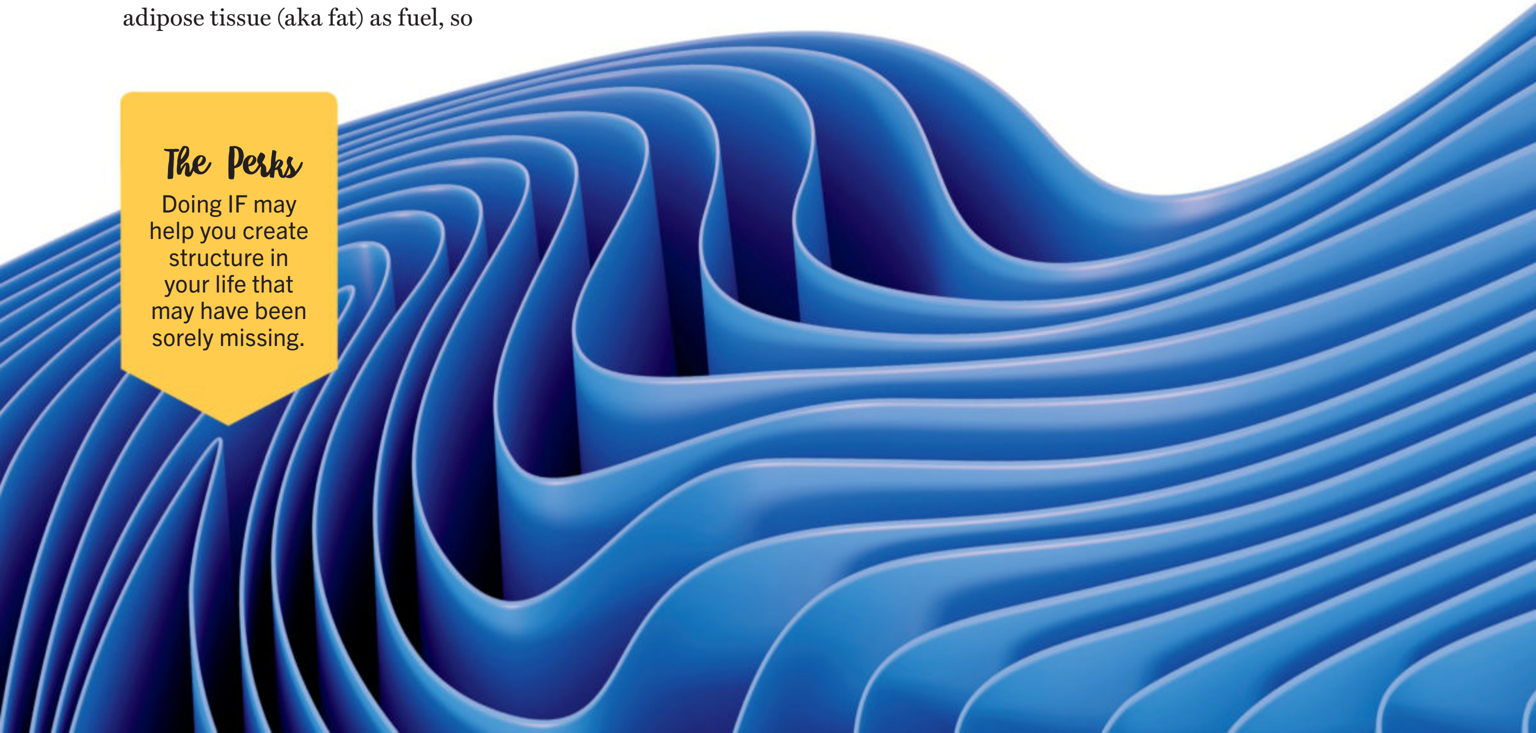
"You want to still eat dinner with your family," says Clarke. "For people with children, it's important to not impose restrictions on them. If you're not eating during family dinner, that's not a good habit to get into."

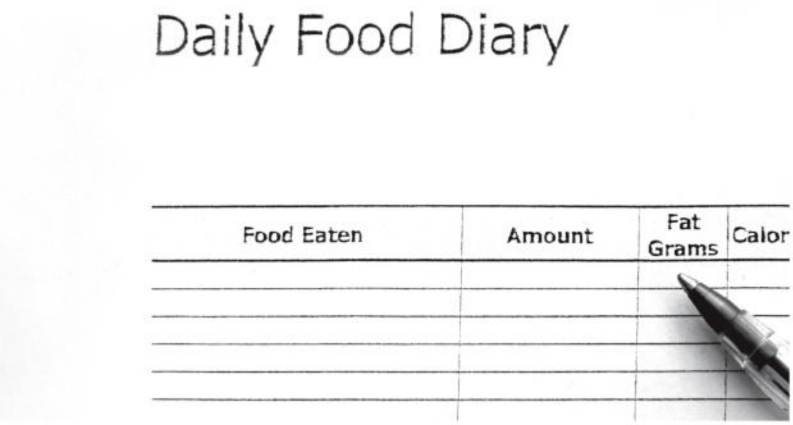


> "FIND THE HOURS THAT WORK BEST WITH YOUR LIFESTYLE."
> —STEPHANIE CLARKE, MS, RDN

The Perks

Doing IF may help you create structure in your life that may have been sorely missing.





Tracking your meals can help you figure out if you're eating too much or not enough.

LJ and Andy Nielsen, who work from home in Santa Cruz, California, have been doing IF for the last eight or nine years. "We felt it would be better for our metabolism to eat earlier in the day, way before bed." They set their window for between 7 a.m. and 2 p.m., shutting it before the typical dinnertime hours. "Now we sleep better and we don't have any heartburn at night. Socially speaking, it's not easier, but we may have a glass of wine on occasion while our friends eat dinner."

3

Know Your Triggers

Here's where you need to strategize a little bit to make the IF switch as seamless as possible in your life. Figure out where your weak and strong spots are, diet-wise. If you don't get hungry until later in the morning, fasting first thing shouldn't bother you. Do you nibble after dinner or drag out your eating until you hit the sack? That's a bad habit that can easily cause pounds to creep on. Cut it out by closing your feeding window at 6 or 7 p.m.

"On the behavioral side of things, which we can never escape, people are ingrained with habits, like those nighttime eaters who tend to eat junk," says White. "If they give themselves a cutoff that they can adhere to, it helps change some of those bad habits. I think that's appealing to people, especially when they've tried to set some boundaries in the past and haven't had success with it."

4

Arrange Your Calendar

Now that you have your window, there's no reason to totally rearrange your life; instead, just shift some things around. Schedule those happy hours on the earlier side if you can, so you're done eating and drinking by 8. Or move your workouts to midday or right after work so you can be fully fueled for intervals or a training run, suggests White.

"If exercise is a regular part of your routine, it's even more important to make sure your meals and snacks are as nutrient dense as possible," says White. "Aim for a balance of healthy carbs, fiber, healthy fat and protein to help fuel you and keep you satisfied."

5

Be a Little Flexible

Even if you commit to a 16:8 plan, you may discover that it's not quite working for you. Experiment to see if a longer eating window feels better or if you just need to move your window earlier or later in the day. The main goal is to go at least 12 hours without eating. If you can't manage more than that right now, don't sweat it. Start where you are.

Fasting Through COVID

CHENADRA WASHINGTON, 36, has been doing intermittent fasting every year for about eight years. "I initially started it to help with weight loss as I had been struggling to get to a healthy weight for much of my life," says the Houston, Texas, resident. "I knew a big part of it was fast food and late-night eating. When I started IF, it was strictly to get control of my eating and counter noshing too close to bedtime."

NOW WASHINGTON DOES an IF "clean up" every year for a few months before her birthday in the summer. In 2020 she did the eating style for the entire year. "During a time when much of the world was gaining COVID pounds, I was sticking to a strict IF regimen that I had kicked off right before the pandemic started. It was probably the most fit I've ever been," she says, adding that when she's doing IF she notices weight loss and increased energy as well as more mental clarity.

WASHINGTON PREFERS A noon-to-8 p.m. format but she has done OMAD (one meal a day) in the past and is currently doing it again for a couple of weeks. She says IF doesn't interfere with her social life. "For the most part, I'm not a night owl, so when I meet with friends or have business meetings, I prefer brunch or lunch, which works fine for my IF window," she says. "There are the occasional times when I adjust the window to accommodate a later dinner or an earlier brunch, but it's rare."

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The Perks

You'll have more time on fasting days for other activities.

HOW TO DO IT

THE 5:2 PLAN

Want to take your fasting to the next level? Try this ratio, which isn't as restrictive as it sounds.

by JANET LEE

OK, SO YOU'VE got your 16:8 format nailed down and you're wondering, *could I go longer*? You might be ready for the 5:2 approach: Two days of fasting each week (not consecutive) and five days of eating normally. "The benefits of fasting change the longer you extend the fast," says Kien Vuu, MD, an assistant professor of health sciences at UCLA in Los Angeles and author of *Thrive State: Your Blueprint for Optimal Health, Longevity and Peak Performance*. Your body releases more growth hormone and more of a compound called BDNF, or brain-derived neurotrophic factor, he says.

"That's one reason you may feel like you have all this clarity versus the standard post-carb coma," says Dr. Vuu. "Autophagy, where the cells start cleaning out debris, really kicks in at 20 hours and ramps up after 36 to 48 hours of fasting."

Giving yourself more time—say, from 8 p.m. Sunday night to 8 a.m. Tuesday morning (a 36-hour fast) is like a nice vacation for your digestion. Without all that energy needed to absorb nutrients and move food through the system, your body has time to clean up and relax a bit versus constantly processing food from dawn to bedtime. It's like giving yourself time off from work so you can power down for a bit.

"Imagine you're constantly ordering packages from Amazon. All those packages come with boxes and paper. If you didn't clean your house, it would be filled with all that trash and it would be hard to find the remote or the end table or your phone," explains Vuu. "That's what happens when you're eating constantly. Your body is collecting all this stuff and storing it into your cells. That clogs up the cells so they don't work efficiently. Autophagy happens with prolonged fasting. It's good for the body. It needs time to rejuvenate when there are no energy stores around."

And here's the (really good) thing to know about the standard 5:2 plan: You're not actually going without food all day. You can have approximately 500 calories of food, depending on your regular calorie intake (guys will want to skew toward 600 to 700).

You can change up your fasting days depending on your week's schedule.

"WHEN YOU EAT CONSTANTLY, YOUR BODY DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO CLEAN UP."

—KIEN VUU, MD

Yay! Tea and coffee (sans cream and sugar) are allowed.

How It Works

The best way to tackle a 5:2 plan is to do the following:

Assess Your Schedule Are there days during the week when you won't miss the standard meals? You don't want to fast two days in a row so pick, say, Monday and Thursday—post-weekend and pre-weekend.

Plan Ahead As with any eating pattern, think ahead a bit so you're not caught unprepared. That's when you reach for the junk or decide you don't want to deal with the hunger. Meal plan and prep at the start of the week so you have healthy options at the ready. Follow these rules:

Drinks As usual, on fasting days, you can have tea, coffee (black), regular and sparkling water. Skip the diet drinks and alcohol.

Food Nix the doughnuts for a snack. Stock up on nutritious, low-cal snacks that provide protein, a little healthy fat (because fat contains 9 calories per gram), high-fiber carbs and veggies. (See pages 46 and 47 for some yummy ideas that are surprisingly low in calories. They're so mouth-watering you'll probably want to put them into your rotation on non-fasting days, too!)

Be Aware Pay attention to when you get hungry, how long it lasts, how you feel after you eat and what your energy and focus are like. It's important to tune in to your body and your habits, and fasting helps you do that, says Vuu.

Don't Be Rigid If you hate it, there are other fasting options—including the simple 12:12 plan—or you can just go back to eating normally.

The Perks

You're really fasting for up to 72 hours each week on a 5:2 plan, but 16 to 20 hours of that is overnight.

9 MINI MEALS FOR FASTING DAYS

Make these tasty slightly-more-than-snacks that contain enough protein, healthy fat and high-fiber carbohydrates to get through those 24-hour (or more) stretches. Each one contains between 200 to 275 calories.

Stephanie Clarke, MS, RDN

1

Whole Grain Avocado Toast With a Hard-Boiled Egg

Top one slice of whole-grain toast with ½ avocado, mashed and mixed with 1 teaspoon lemon juice, ¼ teaspoon salt and a dash of garlic powder. Serve with 1 sliced hard-boiled egg, a sprinkle of microgreens and salt and pepper.

210 calories

2

Protein Pancakes

Whisk together 1 cup egg whites, ½ cup rolled oats, 1 teaspoon maple syrup and ¼ teaspoon cinnamon until well combined. Spray a skillet with nonstick cooking spray and heat over medium heat. You can make two small pancakes or one large one. Pour the batter into the skillet. When the pancake turns white and the edges begin to solidify, flip and cook for another 2 minutes. Drizzle finished pancake with 1 tablespoon natural peanut butter and 1 teaspoon maple syrup. Top with ½ cup mixed berries.

255 calories

3

Green Protein Smoothie

Combine ½ cup frozen pineapple, 1 frozen banana cut into chunks, 1 cup baby spinach, ½ cup plain yogurt, 1 cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk, 1 teaspoon chia seeds and 1 scoop vanilla protein powder. Blend in a blender until smooth.

255 calories

4

Turkey and Avocado Pepper Cups

Cut a red bell pepper into sections making three roughly 2-by-3 inch pieces. Slice half an avocado. Top each pepper section with 1 ounce slice of turkey and an avocado slice.

230 calories

5

Pineapple Chicken Salad

Combine 2 cups greens, 1 cup shredded cabbage, ⅓ cup chopped pineapple, 2 tablespoons chopped cashews, 2 ounces grilled chicken breast, 1 tablespoon soy sauce, 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar, 1 teaspoon honey and 1 teaspoon sesame seeds.

230 calories

ALL THIS FOR JUST 220 CALORIES!

6

Eggs Over Smashed Potatoes With Spinach

Poke a few fork holes in a medium Yukon Gold potato. Microwave potato for 3-4 minutes or until tender. Using the bottom of a glass, smash the potato lightly until it's flattened. Heat 1 teaspoon of olive oil in a small skillet, add the potato to the skillet and saute until browned on each side, about 4–5 minutes. Remove potato and sprinkle with coarse sea salt and pepper. Fry an egg in 1 teaspoon of olive oil to desired doneness. Add 1 cup baby spinach to the pan and saute until wilted. Season with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Top potato with the egg and spinach. Drizzle with yellow or red hot pepper sauce if desired.

220 calories

7

Grilled Garlic Shrimp Over Mixed Greens and Quinoa

Marinate 3 ounces shrimp in 1 teaspoon olive oil, 1 teaspoon lemon juice, 1 teaspoon chopped garlic, ¼ teaspoon salt and a dash of chili pepper flakes for no longer than 15 minutes. Grill shrimp until cooked through, about 2–3 minutes each side. Serve over 2 cups of mixed greens mixed with ½ cup cooked quinoa and tossed with 1 teaspoon olive oil and 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar.

250 calories

8

Maple Dijon Salmon Bowl

Combine 1 teaspoon maple syrup with 1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard. Pat a 3 ounce piece of salmon dry and brush the maple mustard mixture over the top and sides. Roast at 375 F until salmon is cooked through and flakes with a fork, about 7–9 minutes. Add 2 cups chopped Romaine lettuce to a bowl, along with ½ cup chopped cucumbers and 2 tablespoons feta cheese. Serve salmon over veggies and drizzle with 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar.

230 calories

9

Turkey Veggie Melt Skillet

In a small oven-safe skillet, saute ½ cup chopped onion, ¼ cup chopped carrots, ¼ cup chopped celery and ¼ cup chopped mushrooms in 1 teaspoon olive oil over medium heat until just softened, about 4 minutes. Add an additional teaspoon of olive oil and 3 ounces of ground turkey to the skillet. Season with ¼ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon herbes de Provence and ¼ teaspoon garlic powder then cook until turkey is browned and just cooked through. Top with 2 tablespoons of shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese.

275 calories

×

YOU'LL NEED TO PLAN CAREFULLY TO ENSURE YOU GET ALL THE NUTRITION YOU NEED DURING YOUR FEEDING WINDOW.

THE NEXT LEVEL

If the fasting way of life works for you, there are more advanced approaches to explore.

by JANET LEE

ONE THING THAT often starts to happen once you get into your groove with fasting is you start to realize you feel good with a little less food and your body doesn't need as much food as frequently as you thought it did. You become more aware of your body's (and brain's) actual needs in a more tempered, less frantic way. That's when you might decide to experiment and see how you'd feel if you fasted more often. "When you go beyond 24 hours without food, that's what I call an extended fast," says Shana

Hussin, RDN, author of *Fast to Heal* and a dietitian in private practice in Kaukauna, Wisconsin. "There are different reasons to approach an extended fast. I wouldn't do it right away. Do IF or TRE [time-restricted eating] for several weeks, then you can try the longer fast. Extended fasts work beautifully for people with severe insulin resistance, long-standing obesity, PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) and diabetes. A lot of times you need a longer fast to heal and put these into remission."

Think you're ready to really test your hunger and increase cell repair? Consider some of the following.

Alternate Day Fasting

You've tried 5:2 and now you want to explore adding another day or two of fasting per week. "In alternate day fasting, you fast every other day," says Hussin. But do the math and you'll realize that means you're going 36 hours without food. Let's say you eat normally starting at 7 or 8 a.m. on Monday and stop at 7 or 8 p.m. that night. You fast the entire next day and then eat again on Wednesday, starting at 7 or 8 a.m. Then you repeat it. So you've fasted for 36 hours out of 48.

By limiting your calories more than half the time, you should see weight loss, but the drawback with this and other types of advanced fasts is it's hard to get adequate nutrients. "I don't recommend this long-term, but it's still more doable than OMAD, where you're limiting your nutrients daily," says Hussin.

Warrior Diet

With this fasting approach, you essentially eat for four hours a day and fast the rest of the time. Created by author and fasting enthusiast Ori Hofmekler, the diet tries to recreate how our ancient ancestors may have lived, foraging lightly during the day and feasting over the day's "kill" at night. During the fast, you can actually eat small amounts of produce, hard-boiled eggs and even dairy. During the feeding window, you can eat what you want, but of course, you'd want to emphasize high-quality fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein and healthy

Eggs are allowed during fasting periods on the Warrior Diet.

fats. If you're curious, Hofmekler's book (one of many), *The Warrior Diet: Switch on Your Biological Powerhouse for High Energy, Explosive Strength, and a Leaner, Harder Body*, will guide you.

OMAD

A more extreme—some say hybrid—version of the Warrior Diet, OMAD is eating one meal a day, which should take no more than an hour (no cheating and stretching out your meal). "I'm not a huge fan of this approach," says Hussin. "It's hard to stick with and get the nutrition you need. You're too calorie deprived."

"DOING OMAD DAY-IN AND DAY-OUT IS SO DEPRIVING AND COULD MESS UP YOUR METABOLIC RATE."

—SHANA HUSSIN, RDN

Once your window opens, you'll likely be tempted to binge on whatever you can find, which is never a good idea. Proponents say you're only supposed to eat what you can fit onto a plate (without piling it high), but many dietitians warn against having so many rules in addition to just being able to eat for an hour a day. They think there's no good reason to do this unless you're someone who doesn't think about eating and is already only eating one meal a day. And don't make it late at night either. Plan to eat your meal either midday or at least a few hours before bedtime to avoid stomach upset and sleep disturbances.

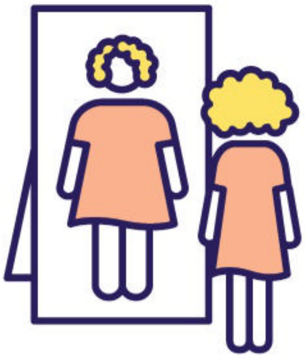
Fasting Mimicking Diet

This approach isn't necessarily extreme, but it does require close attention to your food intake and five days of significant restriction every month. But this is also the most studied fasting approach here and has some intriguing benefits.

Created by Valter Longo, PhD, a professor of gerontology and biological sciences at USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology in Los Angeles, who's done extensive research on fasting, this plan is sort of fasting light. For five days, you eat much less than you would on a normal day but more than you would if you were fasting.

Given his research background, Longo acknowledges that going without food is difficult, which makes it hard to stick with it long enough to actually see its benefits. So based on his experience, he patented his own five-day fasting program, called the ProLon Fasting Mimicking Diet. You do the five-day fast once a month; on those days you consume what is essentially a very, very low-calorie diet—barely more than 700 calories on four of the five days—with a mix of approximately 10% protein, 45% fat and 45% carbs; the percentages are very precise and change depending on the day. (You can buy pre-packaged foods that fit the specific mix of macronutrients.)

A 2019 study published in *Science Translational Medicine* compared Longo's Fasting Mimicking Diet with a normal diet and found that people who followed the fasting mimicking plan once a month for



Stop Fasting If...

That hangry feeling is normal at first, so don't panic if you want to maim everyone who moves a little too slowly, can't make a decision or chews too loudly. But consider opening your eating window sooner (or keeping it open longer) if you feel the following:

YOU'RE NAUSEOUS Those kower blood sugar levels can make you feel nauseous and dizzy. Your body will eventually adapt, but if you're feeling light-headed all the time, nosh on something to see if it passes. "Listen to your body," advises Shana Hussin, RDN.

YOU'RE NOT SLEEPING WELL A poor night's sleep will raise cortisol levels, which makes it harder to fast, says Hussin. If you're not sleeping well, you shouldn't be fasting. Make sure you're getting enough healthy fat and protein as well as whole grains to boost your satiety and keep you energized.

RESTRICTION FEELS TOO GOOD People who have a history of disordered eating shouldn't be fasting anyway since it can trigger old habits. If you feel the urge to strictly control your eating during your normal feeding window, that's a signal to back off and either return to a time-restricted feeding approach, like 12:12, or just give fasting a rest in favor of three nutrient-dense squares a day and not thinking so much about food.

three months saw decreased body mass index, blood sugar, cholesterol and C-reactive protein (an indicator of potential inflammation in the body). Another study, this one in the journal *Nature*, found that fasting diets, along with hormone therapy, reduced levels of insulin and IGF-1 in hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer patients. These changes appear to boost the effectiveness (and reduce certain side effects) of tamoxifen and fulvestrant, two commonly used anticancer drugs.

Extended Fasts

You go without food for 48 to 72 hours with this type of fast—no light snacks, soups or even juices are allowed. Fans of the practice tend to do it once or twice a month. The thinking is that the longer you extend your fasting window, the more benefits you see from reduced inflammation and increased autophagy, insulin sensitivity and cellular repair. Since you're only doing it on occasion, it's more tolerable than a day-in-day-out extreme fasting approach.

Seriously curtailing your food intake on a daily basis is not a healthy or sustainable way to lose weight and it can have a negative impact on your mood, sleep, social life and simply your enjoyment of life. If you want to do an occasional extended fast, work with a nutrition specialist who can go over what you're hoping to accomplish and guide you in selecting the right approach for your concerns—and how to eat optimally during your feeding window so you're not shortchanging your body.

Get Your Mind Right

IF YOUR BRAIN wasn't chattering at you before you tried a more extreme fast, it likely will now. "Longer fasts are especially mental," says Shana Hussin, RDN. "When people first start and they're primarily burning carbs, it's harder because your blood sugar isn't balanced and your brain is saying your blood sugar is falling and you better eat. As you become more of a fat burner and start burning ketones, that chatter will decline."

DURING THOSE TIMES, it's helpful to understand that while your brain may be in panic mode, your body isn't, and those sensations will pass, usually within 15 minutes. Keeping busy will help take your mind off what you're feeling, but being more mindful and learning how to create some separation between your thoughts and your actions is beneficial as well, says Hussin. A regular meditation practice, even just sitting and trying to focus on your breath, will help teach you how to distance yourself from your brain's chatter and stay calm when it starts ringing the hunger bell.

Remember: The point isn't skipping meals, it's feeling your best.

10 WAYS TO UTILIZE FOUND TIME

What do you do with all those extra minutes that you're not spending eating? Experts at the Cleveland Clinic say you should take 20 to 30 minutes to eat a meal, to give your brain time to register the food you're putting into your stomach and send up the "full" signal. If you're skipping two to three meals with an extreme fast, that's an extra 40 to 90 minutes a day that won't be spent on eating. Here's how to use them instead:

1

Exercise

Work up a sweat with a cardio, weight or combo session. You may have more or less energy, though, depending on your fasting schedule, so time it right.

2

Organize Your Fridge

First, toss old sauces and anything growing green colonies. Refrigerator's immaculate? Organize another messy spot in your home.

3

Meditate

Even a few minutes is helpful. Find a quiet spot with no distractions, sit comfortably, and focus on a mantra, visualization or breathing.

4

Listen to a Podcast

You'll find options for everything from creativity to interviews to self-help. (Turn to page 96 for fasting-related podcasts.)

5

Make Grocery Shopping Interesting

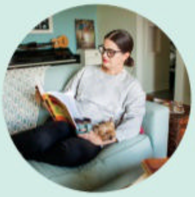
Instead of your usual spot, cruise the international market (on a full stomach) for inspiration.

6

Take a Class

Bolster a work skill, learn something new or make progress toward a degree. It's good for your brain and will take your mind off food.

7



Journal

Besides the bennies for losing weight, keeping a journal can help you organize thoughts and spur creativity and gratitude.

8

Catch Up With a Friend

Meetups don't have to be food-related. It's important to keep those social connections strong, whatever your diet.

9

Download a Language App

Learn to speak Italian or Japanese. Aim for at least 20 minutes of practice time daily. Bonus: It can also stave off dementia.

10

Plan a Trip

Now that your rolled R's are getting smoother, where do you want to go to try them out? Rome? Tokyo? Get researching!

READY, SET, DON'T EAT!

If you want to dip a toe into fasting, these eight tips will set you up for success.

by JANET LEE

The Perks

You may finally overcome that fear of feeling hungry.

IT'S NORMAL TO feel a little daunted at the idea of purposely going without food. After all, it flies in the face of all typical recommendations about eating in a healthy way: Don't skip meals! Turns out, it can be good to skip some meals here and there. Still, you don't have to commit to a two-day fast first thing (or ever, for that matter).

"One thing I tell people is you don't have to be so religious about it," says Kien Vuu, MD, an assistant professor of Health Sciences at UCLA in Los Angeles and author of *Thrive State: Your Blueprint for Optimal Health, Longevity and Peak Performance.* "That's not how our Paleolithic ancestors used to do it. Most people now are eating throughout the day, like for 16 hours. If that's the case, just narrow your window over time. If you're eating for 16 hours, bring it down to 14 or 12, then you can go down from there if you want to."

Twelve hours of eating, say from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and 12 hours of fasting seems pretty doable. It shouldn't set

Make meals more intentional by being focused on the food, not the TV or your phone.

off any alarms from your system that something's not quite right. (See how the different eating plans work, far right.) Besides gradually narrowing your eating window and opening your fasting window, try the following to slide into IF with your eyes wide open.

> **"MOST PEOPLE ARE SPENDING THE MAJORITY OF THEIR DAY EATING."**
>
> —KIEN VUU, MD

1

Take Notes

You don't have to keep a full-on food journal, but it can be helpful to track how the process goes for you in terms of hunger, energy, digestion, sleep, exercise and more. Plus, studies have shown that keeping a food log makes it easier to lose weight.

2

Figure Out Your Goal

Like with any health-related change, know why you're doing it. It's OK to just try it out because you're curious, but if you want to stick with it for more than a month, have a plan. Are you hoping to lose weight, break some bad eating habits, improve your metabolic health? If that's the case, write down your current stats (weight, blood sugar, blood pressure, etc.), and track your progress every couple of weeks.

3

Dial in Your Diet

You're relying on your feeding window nutrients to carry you through your fasting periods, which means you want high-quality foods on board, says Kaukauna, Wisconsin-based dietitian Shana Hussin, RDN, author of *Fast to Heal*, who coaches people on how to use fasting to address various health issues. "When I work with people who want to try fasting, I have them clean up what they're eating and try to start increasing their protein and healthy fat intake and dial back on processed carbs, because it will be really difficult to fast if they're eating the standard American diet. That's step one. Before people start fasting I also tell them to work on eating three balanced meals a day and getting away from a snacking habit."

4 Stretch Out Your Overnight “Fast”

You don’t want to be eating late at night—unless that’s your “daytime”—which means you should stop at 10 p.m. at the latest. “Your digestive system needs those quiet overnight hours to finish digesting and do some housekeeping, sweeping through any final dregs,” says Dr. Vuu. That means you can start eating again at 10 a.m. with a 12-hour fast. If you get hungry before that, then you need to stop eating earlier in the evening. Once that feels normal, then you can try extending your fast.

MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY

Change up your meals daily to get more nutrients.

5 Cut One Meal

If you just want to know how you’ll respond to missing a meal or being hungry, skip dinner one night or breakfast one morning and see what happens. Does your brain go into panic mode? (Your brain is the organ running the show, not your stomach, by the way.) Your stomach just sends signals. Your brain does the interpreting and exaggerating for effect, says Hussin. *OMG, I’m so hungry! I can’t function like this!* But you can counter your brain’s panic mode with thoughts like: *Hunger is just a sensation. It will pass. I can function while being hungry. I won’t feel like this all day.*

6 Spot Your Blocks

Is your nighttime TV habit making it hard to stop noshing or do you prefer to eat something before your morning workout? You may have to either adjust your habits, shift your exercise schedule or change your eating window. Most blocks can easily be overcome with a little more awareness of how you’re feeling.

7 Note What’s Working

Your brain likes a reward so be aware of what you like about this new way of eating. Do you feel more energized or clear, more in control of your habits and cravings? Log it in your journal.

8 Experiment

Play around to find the best approach. If you want to try fasting a day or two a week, start with 16:8 and stick with that until you’re used to how your body is responding and a new way of eating. Then move to 5:2. From there you may want to try something more advanced (flip to page 48 for ideas.)

Do the Math

Figure out when you can eat with this handy chart. For better digestion and circadian rhythms, avoid eating past 10 p.m. On 5:2 fasting days, we included Friday and Saturday, but those may be difficult days to fast due to normal weekend activities with friends and family. Fasting then may leave you feeling deprived or left out, but if it works for you then try it.

5:2 FASTING DAYS	12:12 FASTING	14:10 FASTING	16:8 FASTING
Monday & Wednesday	5 p.m.–5 a.m.	3 p.m.–5 a.m.	1 p.m.–5 a.m.
Monday & Thursday	6 p.m.–6 a.m.	4 p.m.–6 a.m.	2 p.m.–6 a.m.
Tuesday & Thursday	7 p.m.–7 a.m.	5 p.m.–7 a.m.	3 p.m.–7 a.m.
Tuesday & Friday	8 p.m.–8 a.m.	6 p.m.–8 a.m.	4 p.m.–8 a.m.
Wednesday & Friday	9 p.m.–9 a.m.	7 p.m.–9 a.m.	5 p.m.–9 a.m.
Wednesday & Saturday	10 p.m.–10 a.m.	8 p.m.–10 a.m.	6 p.m.–10 a.m.
Sunday is for meal prep		9 p.m.–11 a.m.	7 p.m.–11 a.m.
		10 p.m.–12 p.m.	8 p.m.–12 p.m.
			9 p.m.–1 p.m.
			10 p.m.–2 p.m.

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MAKE IT WORK

Like any diet, having a plan, being prepared and stocking up on healthy food will give you quicker results.

STOCK YOUR PANTRY

After the fast, make sure you have plenty of healthy options on hand.

by JANET LEE

YOU'RE WATCHING THE clock: Just an hour to go… 20 minutes to go…five minutes to go. Finally, you fling open the fridge or cabinet and start hungrily surveying your options, tempted to shove everything you can find in your mouth. "The last thing you want to do when breaking a fast is reach for junk," says Dana White, MS, RD, ATC, a sports dietitian and associate clinical faculty at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. "You want to make those meals and snacks as nutrient dense as possible. If you break your fast with a pastry, you're getting a bunch of sugar but no fiber or protein. Instead, aim for a balance of healthy carbs, protein, healthy fat and fiber."

Having balanced snacks and meals will help control blood sugar fluctuations and help you stay fuller longer. Plus, you'll get nutrients that work for

> “FRUIT AND VEGGIES ARE ‘SUPER’ FOODS WHEN THEY’RE AT THEIR PEAK IN-SEASON.”
>
> —DANA WHITE, RDN

your body. The latter is key since, as White points out, we don’t really have any long-term research about the potential for nutrient deficiencies as a result of long-term fasting. If you’re cutting out healthy food, you may be missing out on vitamins, minerals, protein, fiber and good-for-you plant compounds, such as antioxidants.

While you could just eat what you want during your feeding window, if you’re going through the effort of fasting—presumably to lose weight or improve your overall health—why thwart your progress by noshing on junk? Instead, set yourself up for success, just like you would if you were following a regular diet, by stocking up on healthy options. Keep the following on your shopping list for flavor, satiety and health perks.

Nuts and Seeds

If you’re stuck on a desert island and can only bring a small bag, leave the bulky avocados at home and opt for nuts and seeds. Almonds, walnuts, pistachios, hazelnuts—it’s hard to go wrong with these densely packed energy bombs. They’re full of healthy fat and high-quality protein as well as fiber and antioxidants. Nuts and seeds are also good for heart and metabolic health, help reduce your risk of cancer and thwart inflammation. And despite their energy (calorie) density, noshing on nuts won’t automatically add pounds. One Mediterranean Diet–related study, published in the journal *Obesity*, found that people who ate nuts two or more times a week were less likely to gain weight than those who rarely noshed on them.

Alternate day and 5:2 fasters take note, nuts are easy to snack on: A small handful is usually adequate. And don’t forget about seeds. They’re ideal for topping your yogurt, tossing into smoothies or soups, or dressing up salads. Chia, flax (grind them up), hemp (aka hemp hearts) and sesame seeds should be your go-tos.

Berries

We hate to be fruit snobs—especially when virtually all fruits are nutritious and replete with plant-based compounds, vitamins and minerals—but berries are like the nuts of the fruit world: They’re compact packages densely packed with fiber and antioxidants. They help fight cancer, in addition to boosting heart, brain and metabolic health. (Popping a handful of berries is like taking a blood pressure/high cholesterol pill all in one.) Plus, the fiber is filling (and good for your gut bugs).

Sweet, tart, juicy and delicious, berries’ bennies come with a lower calorie count, too, which makes them great for 5:2 fasting days when you can have a small amount of food and you want to make it count.

Fill your smoothie or plate with blueberries, raspberries, strawberries and blackberries in particular. Go ahead and throw in cherries: Although technically they’re not a berry, these ruby red fruits are brimming with heart-healthy polyphenols.

Cruciferous Veggies

Kale, Swiss chard, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, arugula, cauliflower, collard greens—you just can’t beat the nutritional goodness in cruciferous veggies. They’re tops

Overcooking can make Brussels sprouts taste bitter.

for helping reduce bladder and colon cancer risk; they help reduce inflammation and strengthen the immune system; plus they're rich in vitamins. Besides disease-fighting antioxidants, cruciferous veggies are also rich in another super-nutrient: fiber. According to a study done by researchers at the University of Massachusetts, eating 30 grams of fiber a day—even if you don't make any other dietary changes—can make it easier to lose weight and improve insulin sensitivity.

"There's no such thing as a bad fruit or vegetable," says White. "I encourage people to eat seasonally. That's where you get into the 'super' status of foods. They're at their peak, nutrient- and flavor-wise, when they're in season."

Healthy Low-Calorie Foods

BEETS
CARROTS
CUCUMBERS
GRAPEFRUIT
MUSHROOMS
PEPPERS
SPINACH
TOMATOES
WATERMELON

Healthy Fat

F-A-T is not a bad word! Healthy fat is very good for you, especially when you use it to replace saturated fat in your diet, according to an American Heart Association report. Poly- and monounsaturated fats, which are found in vegetable, olive, peanut and canola oils; avocados; nuts; seeds and some fish, have been linked with a lower risk of disease, including heart disease. They can actually reduce cholesterol in the blood. On the other hand, saturated fats, found in red meat and other animal products (think: cheese, ice cream, full-fat dairy and butter) have been linked with an increased risk of disease. Government guidelines recommend getting 20% to 35% of your calories from fat.

Legumes

Protein? Check. Folate? Check. Potassium? Check. Fiber? Enthusiastic check. Beans, dried peas, lentils and soybeans—known as legumes—contain all sorts of vitamins and minerals, including gut-friendly fiber and resistant starch. A large 2017 study, published in *The Lancet*, looked at fruit, vegetable and legume intake in 18 different countries and found that eating legumes was inversely related with a lower risk of dying early.

These diverse-looking veggies—yes, they're vegetables—are high in prebiotic fiber, especially compounds called GOS or galactooligosaccharides, which help support the immune system and provide food for *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* bugs in the large intestine. They're also great sources of plant-based protein if you're cutting back on animal sources.

Fat has 9 calories per gram, which means that avocado isn't low-cal.

Whole Grains

A 2019 study in the journal *Gut* found that eating a diet rich in whole grains led to more weight loss and less inflammation compared to eating refined grains. Rye is especially beneficial, according to the study, possibly because it contains more fiber. (Of note, the whole grain diet didn't alter the gut microbiome or

Probiotics help ferment the kimchi, then populate your gut.

“TARGET INFLAMMATION, A BIG CONTRIBUTOR TO DISEASE, BY EATING MORE PLANTS.”

—KATIE TAKAYASU, MD, MBA

insulin sensitivity.) All the more reason to include rye in your more limited diet: It’s nutrient dense and filling and can help promote weight loss. Also include whole wheat bread, barley, bulgur, oatmeal and brown rice on the menu.

Tempeh

“When people adopt any of the IF protocols, it becomes more of a subtraction game—you’re cutting things out of your diet,” says White. “But if you reduce your protein intake too low, you won’t be able to spare that lean body mass. You could end up losing muscle instead of fat.” That’s a big no-no, since muscle tissue requires more calories to function than fat tissue does. Lose muscle and you’re sacrificing your metabolism.

If you’re lifting weights, you definitely want to make sure you’re consuming adequate protein as it will supply the building blocks for muscle growth. Lean, good quality poultry and beef are fine but if you’re looking for a plant-based alternative to meat that has a little heft to it, organic tempeh, which is made from fermented soybeans, is a fantastic option. It’s perfect for chili, tacos, stir frying with veggies and soups. Some people even grill it.

“Plants are one of your No. 1 fighters of inflammation, which is a driver of so many chronic health conditions these days,” says Katie Takayasu, MD, MBA, an integrative medicine

The Perks

Getting protein from plants and seafood can improve cholesterol levels.

Got hot flashes? The soy in tempeh might help.

physician and author of *Plants First: A Physician's Guide to Wellness Through a Plant-Forward Diet*. Plus, a 2020 study published in *Journal of Nutritional Science and Vitaminology* found that the isoflavones—plant polyphenols—in soy may help fight obesity and regulate blood sugar.

Kimchi

This spicy, crunchy, tangy combo of fermented cabbage or radish—both cruciferous veggies—garlic, ginger and other spices hits many flavor notes, plus it contains healthy gut bugs as well as both soluble and insoluble fiber. It makes a kicky snack or a versatile pairing for everything from rice and veggies to eggs.

Seafood

Downing a couple servings of seafood each week helps ensure you get adequate amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, compounds that have anti-inflammatory benefits. Fish high in omega-3s (and low in mercury) include wild salmon, sardines, mussels, rainbow trout, oysters, anchovies and Atlantic mackerel, according to the Environmental Working Group. Canned light and albacore tuna, halibut, lobster, mahi-mahi and sea bass contain higher levels of mercury while swordfish, marlin, orange roughy, and bluefin and bigeye tuna are extra high on the mercury scale. Eat these in moderation.

FASTING RULEBOOK

LIMIT THESE FOODS WHILE FASTING

1

Processed Meat
Red meat is high in saturated fat and can increase inflammation, but processed meats (think: salami, sausage, chorizo, bacon) are even worse for your body, spiking inflammation and increasing the risk of stomach and colon cancers.

2

Diet Drinks
You'd think these would be safe since they have zero calories, but there is research showing these drinks can stimulate your appetite and cause an insulin spike, which is exactly what you don't need while fasting.

3

High-Sugar Foods/Drinks
Besides being empty calories with no nutritional value, foods high in sugar will spike your blood sugar levels, which then come crashing down, taking your energy with them. (Note "empty" doesn't mean devoid of calories, only nutrition.) You don't want that happening while you're fasting as you'll start craving sugar or food in general to try to right the ship.

4

Trigger Foods
Whether it's chips, chocolate, ice cream or even alcohol, if there's a food that seems to whisper your name all day or night, get it out of the house while you're fasting. It's fine to treat yourself, but when you're super hungry, like at the end of a fast, knowing that food is there will make it much harder to control your urges.

NOW EAT THIS

When your window opens, fill up on nutritious, delicious fare.

by JANET LEE
recipe photographs by ALISON BICKEL PHOTOGRAPHY

THE BEST PART about intermittent fasting—whether you're going 16 hours, 20 hours or 24 hours without food—is that when you do eat, you can pretty much eat whatever you want. You're not fasting then restricting calories. (Although you can certainly take that approach, you then start treading into serious deprivation territory, which will make this style of eating much harder to stick with.)

What every expert will tell you, though, is instead of reaching for junk with empty calories, fill your plate with nutritious foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber, (such as veggies, fruit and whole grains), healthy fat and protein. Besides giving you the nutrients you need to perform your best and stay energized, this mix will help ensure that your gut is functioning the way it should (helping to decrease inflammation and clear out waste), your muscles aren't being broken down for fuel, and you're staying satisfied so your fasting periods aren't miserable.

Chef Nicole Poirier, author of *Intermittent Fasting Cookbook: Fast-Friendly Recipes for Optimal Health, Weight Loss, and Results*, makes that eating window, however short, work hard for you while still being delicious. She's compiled client-tested recipes for every meal plus snacks and appetizers.

When you've worked up a powerful appetite but don't want to think too hard about how to put something together, use the following recipes to guide you.

FIGHTS INFLAMMATION

Superfood Salmon Niçoise With Black Lentils

"I've taken the standard Niçoise up a notch by swapping in superfood salmon for tuna, purple potatoes for regular and adding extra nutritious black lentils. You still get that classic South of France feeling but with a healthy, happy twist," says Poirier. "Salmon and lentils are both known for their mood-boosting properties."

Salmon contains selenium, potassium and B vitamins.

SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS

½	cup black lentils
	Salt
2	cups water
4	ounces purple potatoes, sliced into ½-inch-thick rounds
4	ounces fresh green beans, broken into bite-size pieces
1	8-ounce salmon fillet
½	teaspoon olive oil
¼	teaspoon herbes de Provence
¼	teaspoon salt
	Black pepper
2	cups romaine lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
½	cup cherry tomatoes, chopped
1	hard-boiled egg, chopped
2	tablespoons prepared olive tapenade
	Lemon wedges

DRESSING

2	tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2	tablespoons white wine vinegar
½	teaspoon Dijon mustard, preferably grainy
½	teaspoon minced garlic

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Make the salad: Sift through the lentils and rinse thoroughly. Place in a small saucepan with 1½ cups water and a pinch of salt and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 22 minutes. Remove cover and let cool slightly.

2 Meanwhile, place 2 cups of water and the potatoes into a medium saucepan with a pinch of salt and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the potatoes are just easily pierced with a fork, about 10 minutes.

3 Preheat oven to 425 F.

4 Add the green beans to the potato saucepan and simmer for 1–2 minutes, so the beans are bright green and crisp-tender. Transfer potatoes and beans to a strainer in the sink to drain and cool.

5 Place the salmon on a parchment-lined pie tin and drizzle with olive oil. Season with herbs de Provence, salt and pepper to taste. Bake for 12 minutes. Remove and set aside.

6 Make the dressing: Whisk together the dressing ingredients in a small bowl or shake in a small screw-top jar to emulsify.

7 Arrange the romaine, tomatoes, egg, potatoes, green beans and lentils on a serving platter. Season with salt and pepper, and spoon tapenade and dressing over salad. Top with salmon. Garnish with lemon wedges. (You can also toss all the ingredients together in a large mixing bowl, then top with salmon.)

Soak the skewers in water before using.

ASIAN-INSPIRED

Satay Shrimp & Crunchy Rainbow Slaw

"Satay where you are! Because you're gonna love this one," says Poirier. "Satay sauce usually involves peanut butter, but this dressing works just as well with almond or sunflower seed butters."

SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces raw shrimp, peeled (no smaller than 26–30 count)
- 2 teaspoons avocado oil or another neutral-tasting oil
- 2 teaspoons coconut aminos or tamari
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt

SATAY SAUCE/DRESSING

- ¼ cup creamy plain nut or seed butter (peanut, almond, cashew or sunflower seed butter)
- ¼ cup coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons minced shallot or white part of green onion
- 1 tablespoon coconut sugar, maple syrup, yacon syrup or maple-flavored monk fruit syrup
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce, tamari or coconut aminos
- 1 tablespoon sambal or Sriracha
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger

SLAW

- 1 cup shredded red cabbage
- 1 bunch curly kale, torn into bite-size pieces
- 1 medium carrot, julienned (about ½ cup)
- ½ small, sweet red bell pepper, julienned (about ½ cup)
- ½ cup chopped cucumber
- ¼ cup almonds
- 1 green onion, sliced on the bias

INSTRUCTIONS

1 In a medium mixing bowl, combine shrimp, oil, coconut aminos, spices and salt and toss well. Thread 2 to 4 shrimp on each skewer depending on size. Set aside to marinate on the skewers in the mixing bowl while you prepare the dressing and slaw.

2 To make dressing, add all ingredients to a blender and blend at high speed until smooth. This will make about 1 cup, plus extra.

3 In a large mixing bowl, combine all the slaw ingredients (except green onion) and ¼ of the satay sauce. Toss well to incorporate. Set aside.

4 Heat a frying pan over medium-high heat until a drop of water sizzles upon contact, about 3 minutes. Place the shrimp skewers into the pan in a single layer. Do not crowd the pan or shrimp will not get the crispy browned edges. Cook for 2–3 minutes on each side, flipping once. They should curl up and brown a little on each side. Remove from the pan to plate as soon as they are done.

5 Divide the slaw between 2 plates and top with half of the skewers. Drizzle 1 tablespoon of dressing over the shrimp, and garnish with a sprinkle of green onions.

ONLY 105 CALORIES PER BALL

Dark Chocolate Almond Power Balls

"Sometimes when your eating window is opening or coming to a close, you might need just one little bite of something to soothe the savage beast in your belly," says Poirier. "For me, it's usually when I'm opening my feasting window and have yet to decide what to eat. To ensure that my eyes accurately reflect the size

You don't have to eat all three in a serving. A single ball will do the job.

of my stomach, I keep these ultra-satisfying and tasty little guys on hand. They include chocolate, but they're more of a savory snack loaded with beneficial polyphenols, vitamins, minerals and healthy fats."

MAKES 24 BALLS (3 PER SERVING)

INGREDIENTS

1	cup shaved almonds
1	cup almond butter
½	cup pumpkin seeds
⅓	cup chia seeds
¼	cup sunflower seeds
¼	cup unsweetened flaked coconut
2	tablespoons cocoa powder, divided
1	teaspoon vanilla extract
½	teaspoon fine salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Combine all the ingredients, except for 1 tablespoon cocoa powder, in the food processor and pulse until a mostly smooth paste is formed. I like the texture of slightly larger almond and pumpkin seed pieces to make this high-protein, high-fat snack feel even more filling.

2 Line a baking tray with parchment paper. Scoop the mixture into 2-tablespoon portions and place on the baking tray. Place the remaining tablespoon of cocoa powder into a pie plate or bowl on the side. Moisten your hands slightly, roll each mound between your palms into a smooth ball, and then roll it in the extra cocoa powder to coat. Place back on the parchment-lined tray. Transfer to the freezer to chill and firm up for 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to three weeks.

Fire-roasted tomatoes give this soup a little surprise *zing*.

LOADED WITH FIBER

Fast Breaking Vegetable Soup

"Eating this soup is like eating a rainbow because of how colorful it is," says Poirier. "It's perfect for breaking an extended fast or enjoying anytime. Simple, light and nutritious, it's guaranteed to brighten your day."

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

2	tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
½	cup chopped carrot
½	cup chopped celery
½	cup chopped onion
½	cup chopped yellow squash
½	cup chopped mushrooms (any kind)
½	cup chopped cabbage
½	cup chopped green beans
¼	teaspoon fine salt
½	teaspoon Italian seasoning
1	can (14.5-ounce) fire-roasted diced tomatoes
2	cups bone broth, such as low-sodium chicken broth
	Sea salt
	Freshly ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Heat olive oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add all the raw vegetables (carrots through green beans), salt and Italian seasoning. Saute for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes, allowing some liquid to cook off.

2 Pour in the bone broth. Bring to a rolling boil for 2 minutes before lowering the heat to medium-low and simmering for 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and enjoy.

ONE SUPER-FOOD BOWL

Break-Fast Bibimbap With Sesame Fried Egg

“Bibimbap is one of my favorite dishes,” says Poirier. “It looks complicated, but it comes together quickly once the chopping is done, and you can shortcut most of the recipe with precut veggies from the grocery store. It’s ultra-high in a variety of nutrients and the kimchi gives you a great dose of probiotics, as well. Although I prefer mine with either shirataki or cauliflower rice to keep it low carb, traditional rice is a delicious addition, whether you choose white, brown, red, forbidden or something else. Substitute away!”

SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS

4	cups water
	Salt
1	medium carrot, julienned
1	cup broccoli florets, cut into bite-size or smaller pieces
1	cup mung bean sprouts
4	teaspoons sesame oil, divided
1	(8 ounce) packet rinsed and drained shirataki rice (such as Miracle Rice), 1 cup cauliflower rice or 1 cup steamed white rice
2	eggs
¼	cup prepared kimchi (fermented cabbage)
¼	cup shredded, toasted nori (optional)
1	tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
	Gochujang Korean hot sauce or crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1 In a 2-quart saucepan, bring the water and ½ teaspoon salt to a boil over medium-high heat. Add the carrots and blanch for 30 seconds until they are just becoming flexible. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside on a plate. Repeat the process with the broccoli and bean sprouts. Drizzle vegetables with ½ teaspoon of sesame oil and salt to taste.

2 Heat a small frying pan over medium-high heat until a drop of water sizzles upon contact.

If using shirataki rice, be sure to drain the packet and rinse before adding to the hot pan to dry fry. Allow the moisture to cook out and the rice to turn opaque, stirring frequently. Remove from the pan and set aside.

3 If using cauliflower or white rice, combine 3 tablespoons of water and 1 cup of cauliflower/white rice and add to the frying pan, stirring until all the liquid has evaporated. Remove and set aside.

4 Crack the two eggs into a small bowl (don’t break the yolks).

5 Rinse the saucepan and place on the stove over medium-high heat again. Add the remaining sesame oil. Once it runs freely around the pan, lower the heat to medium and gently pour the eggs into the pan, separating them by drawing a line between them with a spatula. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt. Cook, uncovered, for about 4 minutes, allowing the bottoms to brown and become slightly crispy by the time the top of the whites are set. For less crispy eggs, turn the heat to low and cook, covered, for 2 to 2½ minutes.

6 Turn off the heat and start building your bowls. Bibimbap traditionally gets all mixed up when you start eating it but is super photo-worthy before that first bite! Divide the rice into two bowls. For each bowl, arrange half the toppings in individual piles on top of the rice, working in a clockwise fashion with the broccoli, carrots, bean sprouts, kimchi, and/or nori (if using). Place the egg on top and sprinkle each bowl with ½ tablespoon sesame seeds. Drizzle with gochujang or crushed red pepper flakes if desired.

Recipes reprinted from Intermittent Fasting Cookbook: Fast-Friendly Recipes for Optimal Health, Weight Loss, and Results *© 2020 Quarto Publishing Group USA Inc.; Text © 2020 Nicole Poirier*

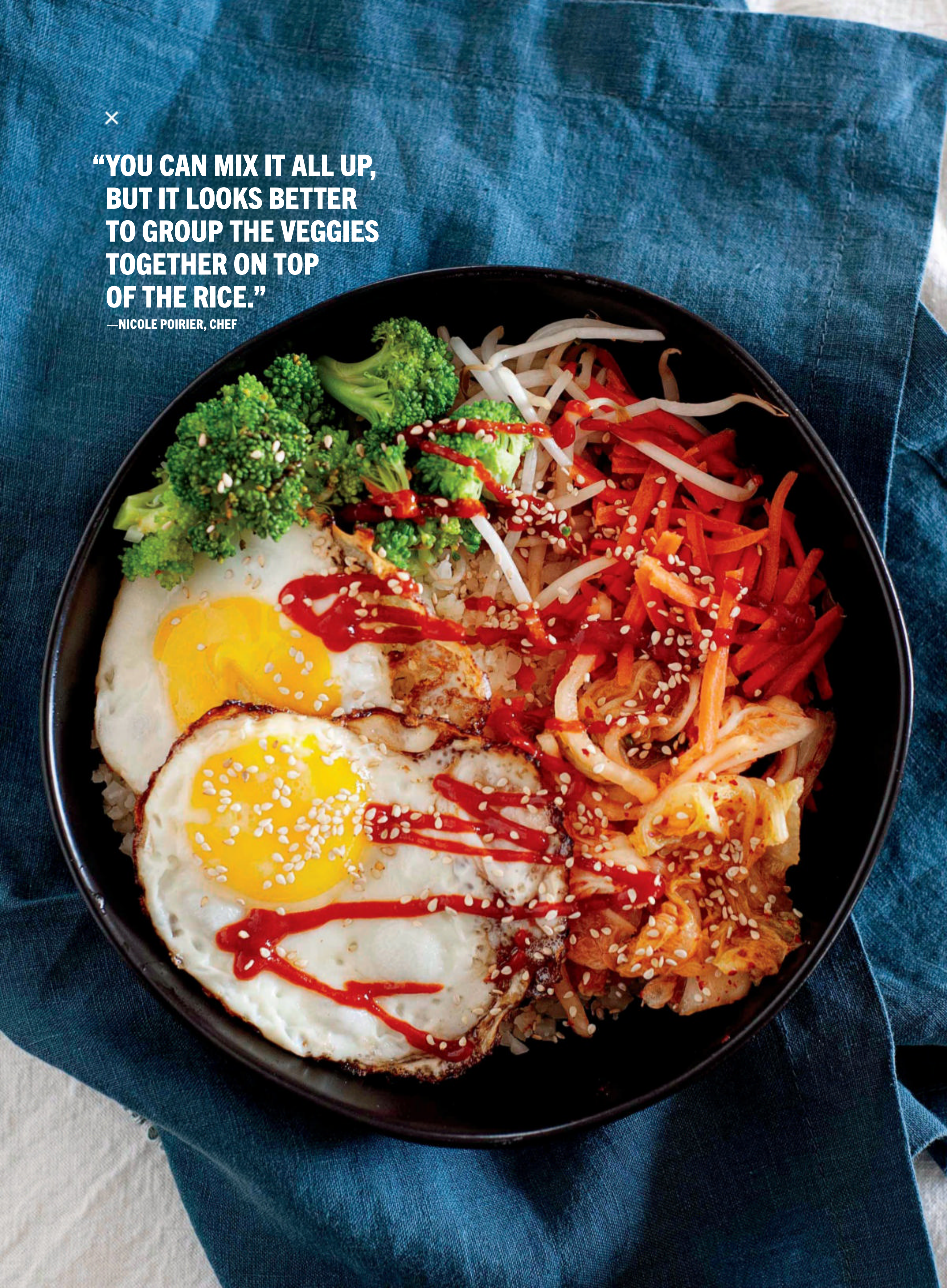
Make It Enjoyable

When you’re starting to feel a little deprived, you want to make sure you’re maximizing the vibes from every meal. To do that, ensure your plate or bowl has the following:

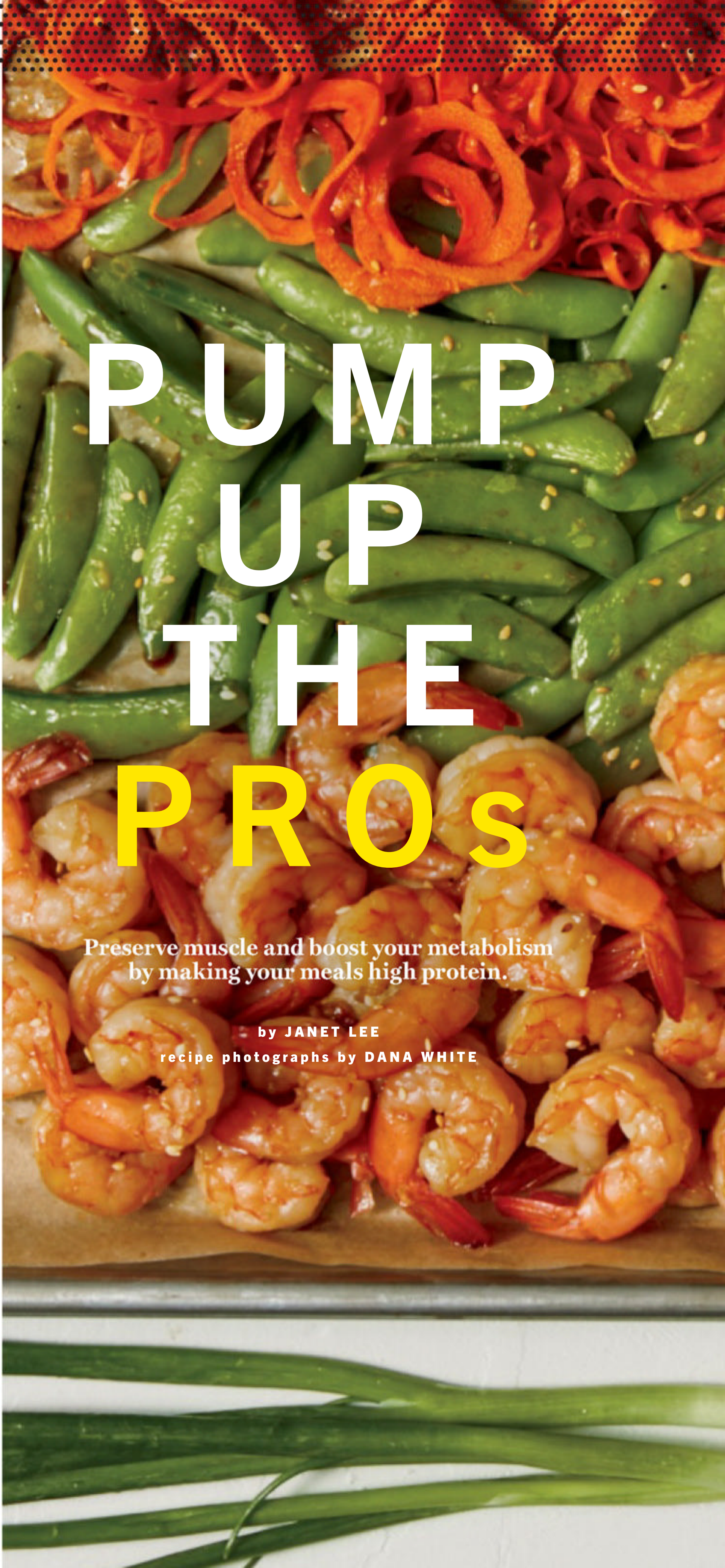
1 COLOR Many a chef will say “you eat with your eyes.” What you’re putting in your mouth should look appetizing. You don’t have to arrange your plate all *Top Chef* style, but make sure it’s colorful and appealing. Purple potatoes, black lentils, rainbow slaw—the recipes above are a feast for the eyes and belly.

2 TEXTURE Chips are so addictive not just because of the salty punch. They’re also fun to eat; that crunch is very satisfying. You can add crunch to any meal with fresh veggies, fried or baked toppings (onions, veggies, beans) and nuts and seeds.

3 BALANCED FLAVORS Anything that’s all one note—be it people, songs or food—is boring. Keep your dishes interesting by including at least a few of the five flavors: salty, sweet, sour, bitter and umami. Is your dessert tasting like a sugar bomb? Add some salt or citrus fruit to cut through the heaviness. Chili a little too spicy? Add some cinnamon and unsweetened cocoa to tame it and give it more depth.



> **“YOU CAN MIX IT ALL UP, BUT IT LOOKS BETTER TO GROUP THE VEGGIES TOGETHER ON TOP OF THE RICE.”**
>
> **—NICOLE POIRIER, CHEF**



PUMP UP THE PROs

Preserve muscle and boost your metabolism by making your meals high protein.

by **JANET LEE**

recipe photographs by **DANA WHITE**

ONE THING YOU don't want to do when you're reducing calories—even if you're not trying to eat less, it's probable you will with intermittent fasting—is skimp on protein. It helps preserve muscle, keeping your metabolism humming along instead of plummeting as the number on the scale drops. But that's not all. Protein also keeps you fuller longer, says Dana White, MS, RD, ATC, a sports dietitian and associate clinical faculty at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. "If you're modifying your eating window with intermittent fasting, you have to eat meals that are satisfying so you're not starving," she explains. "The other piece is about sparing lean body mass. A lot of people opt for IF for weight loss, but you don't want to lose muscle."

White is author of several cookbooks, including *Healthy One Pan Dinners*, *Healthy Vegan Air Fryer Cookbook* and *Healthy, Quick & Easy College Cookbook*. Every recipe in them is, you guessed it, healthy, but they also address another big stumbling block when it comes to trying to eat better: They make cooking a scrumptious meal easy. White rifled through her cookbooks for the following protein-rich recipes, both animal- and plant-based, so you always have a power meal to reach for when your window opens.

TAKES 10 MINUTES

Ginger Shrimp With Carrots and Snap Peas

Serve this solo or with brown rice pasta.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

1	pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined
4	large carrots, spiralized or thinly sliced
12	ounces sugar snap peas
2	tablespoons reduced sodium soy sauce or gluten-free tamari
2	teaspoons sesame oil
1	tablespoon honey
2	teaspoons fresh ginger root, grated
1	clove garlic, minced
3	scallions, finely chopped
	Sesame seeds (optional)
	Sriracha for serving (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Preheat oven to 400 F.

2 Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. Place shrimp on one side of the sheet pan, place carrots on the other side of the pan and place the sugar snap peas in the middle.

3 In a small bowl whisk together soy sauce, sesame oil, honey, ginger and garlic. Pour sauce over the shrimp and vegetables.

4 Place sheet pan in the oven and roast for 10 minutes until shrimp is pink and vegetables are crisp-tender. Remove from oven and garnish with sesame seeds and chopped scallions. Serve with Sriracha, if desired.

WORKS FOR ANY MEAL

Shakshuka With Kale

The eggs simmer in a delicious bath of tomatoes and vegetables. Serve solo, or with warm pita bread or roasted potatoes.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

1	tablespoon olive oil
½	onion, sliced
1	bell pepper, sliced
2	cloves garlic, chopped
1	(28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
4	cups chopped kale
½	teaspoon kosher salt
½	teaspoon ground cumin
4	eggs
⅓	cup crumbled feta cheese
½	cup chopped fresh parsley

Eggs contain choline and cooked tomatoes are rich in lycopene.

The Perks

Steak provides protein as well as high-quality, readily absorbable iron.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Preheat oven to 400 F. In a cast-iron skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and pepper and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

2 Add the garlic, crushed tomatoes, kale, salt and cumin. Stir well. Add 1 cup water and allow to simmer over medium heat for 15 minutes.

3 Using a large spoon, create a well in the tomato mixture and gently crack an egg into it. (To help ensure egg yolks don't break, crack the eggs into a small bowl before gently pouring into the skillet.) Repeat with the remaining eggs.

4 Transfer the skillet to the oven and cook for 8 to 10 minutes, or

until eggs are cooked to desired doneness. Remove from the oven and top with feta and parsley before serving. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to four days.

TIP You can freeze the tomato mixture, reheat and add the eggs when ready to serve.

SLOW-COOKER MEAL

Flank Steak Tacos With Charred Corn Salsa

Flank steak is one of the leanest cuts of beef, yet it's still incredibly flavorful and fall-apart tender when slow-cooked.

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

½	orange (juice only)
1	garlic clove, finely chopped
1	teaspoon honey
1	teaspoon olive oil
1	teaspoon ground cumin
1	teaspoon smoked paprika
1	teaspoon kosher salt
½	teaspoon chili powder
½	teaspoon black pepper
2½	pounds flank steak
1	yellow onion, sliced

FOR THE SALSA

2	ears of corn, cooked (if using frozen, defrost and char in a dry skillet over high heat)
1	roasted red pepper, chopped
1	medium tomato, seeded and chopped
3	tablespoons finely chopped red onion
1	lime (juice only)
2	teaspoons olive oil
½	cup chopped fresh cilantro
½	teaspoon kosher salt
3	dashes hot sauce
12	6-inch corn tortillas

TO SERVE

Greek yogurt, diced avocado, lime wedges

INSTRUCTIONS

1 In a small bowl, whisk together the orange juice, garlic, honey, olive oil, cumin, smoked paprika, salt, chili powder and black pepper.

2 Place the flank steak and onion in the slow cooker and pour the sauce on top. Using tongs, turn the meat over a couple of times to ensure it is fully coated in sauce. Cover and set to slow cook on low for 8 hours.

3 To prepare the salsa, place the corn directly over an open flame on a gas burner on medium-high heat or under the broiler for 2 to 3 minutes per side or until charred as desired. Set aside to cool slightly.

4 Once the corn is cool enough to handle, cut the kernels from the cob and place in a medium bowl. Add the roasted red pepper, tomato, red onion, lime juice, olive oil, cilantro, salt and hot sauce. Stir and set aside.

5 When cook time is up, remove the slow-cooker lid and drain away the cooking liquid, reserving about ⅓ cup. Shred the meat, adding back small amounts of the cooking liquid as desired. Serve on warmed tortillas with charred corn salsa and Greek yogurt, avocado and lime, if desired.

First three recipes excerpted from Healthy One Pan Dinners. *Reprinted by permission of Alpha, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © 2020 by Dana Angelo White.*

AIR FRYER–FRIENDLY

Chickpea Burgers

Sink your teeth into this burger that contains loads of hunger-fighting protein and fiber, plus 25% of your daily iron needs. If you don't have an air fryer, you can cook this in a skillet.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

2	teaspoons olive oil, plus more
½	white onion, diced
2	teaspoons kosher salt, divided
1	teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1	(15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained, liquid reserved
½	cup grated carrots
½	cup fresh parsley leaves, chopped
1	garlic clove, chopped
¾	teaspoon ground cumin
1	teaspoon Dijon mustard
1	tablespoon tahini
¼	cup all-purpose flour, plus more

FOR THE PICKLED ONIONS

2	tablespoons rice vinegar
1	tablespoon granulated sugar
1	teaspoon kosher salt
½	red onion, thinly sliced

TO SERVE

Arugula, sliced tomatoes, vegan whole-grain buns

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Set air fryer temp to 380 F.

2 In a small saucepan on the stovetop over medium heat, make the pickled onions by combining rice vinegar, sugar and salt and ¼ cup water. Bring to a boil. Add the red onion and turn off the heat. Set aside.

3 In a medium skillet on the stovetop over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the white onion and season with 1 teaspoon salt and pepper. Saute until softened, about 2 to 3 minutes

4 In a food processor, combine the white onion, chickpeas, carrots, parsley, garlic, cumin, mustard, tahini, flour and the remaining 1 teaspoon of salt. Pulse until just combined. (If the mixture seems too dry, add the reserved chickpea liquid 1 tablespoon at a time.)

5 Form the mixture into 4 equal-sized burgers. Transfer them to a plate that's been dusted with flour. Brush the burgers with olive oil.

6 Place the burgers in the fryer basket and cook until golden brown, about 15 minutes. If not using an air fryer, saute in a nonstick skillet over medium heat with 2 teaspoons olive oil for 7 to 8 minutes per side.

7 Remove the burgers from the air fryer or skillet. Toast the buns, top with burgers and desired toppings.

TIP You can store the pickled red onions in the fridge for up to a week.

Excerpted from Healthy Vegan Air Fryer Cookbook. *Reprinted by permission of Alpha, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © 2020 by Dana Angelo White*

SPUR YOUR CREATIVITY

Bored with regular tacos, burgers or grilling but not sure what to do instead? Let these options inspire you.

1

Tacos
Fried tempeh
Crumbled tofu
Fish or shrimp
Jackfruit
Beans/lentils
Roasted veggies

2

Burgers
Salmon burgers
Ground chicken
Ground turkey
Mock meat
Portobella mushroom
Black bean burger

3

Grilled Steak
Mushrooms
Cauliflower
Tofu steaks
Eggplant
Mock meat
Veggie kebabs

> **“SERVE THESE FALAFEL-STYLE BY POPPING THEM INTO PITA POCKETS AND ADDING HUMMUS OR TAHINI.”**
> —DANA WHITE, MS, RD, ATC

VERSATILE MEATBALLS

Greek-Style Turkey Meatballs

You can make more than just meatloaf and burgers with ground turkey! Serve these meatballs with pasta, salad or rice or tuck them into pita bread and top with some hummus or Greek yogurt.

SERVES 4 (4 BALLS PER SERVING)

INGREDIENTS

1	pound lean ground turkey
1	egg
¾	cup panko breadcrumbs
½	medium red bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped
¾	cup crumbled feta cheese
½	teaspoon kosher salt
¼	teaspoon black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Preheat the oven to 400 F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

2 In a large bowl, combine the ground turkey, egg, breadcrumbs, bell pepper, feta, salt and pepper. Using clean hands, mix the ingredients until well combined and then roll into 16 equal-sized meatballs.

3 Place the meatballs on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for about 20 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 165 F. (Be sure to use a thermometer.)

4 Remove the meatballs from the oven and set aside to cool slightly before serving. Store in the fridge for up to one week or freeze for up to three months.

TIP For a bolder Mediterranean flavor, add a teaspoon of dried oregano to the turkey mixture.

Modified from Healthy, Quick & Easy College Cookbook. *Reprinted by permission of Alpha, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.* *Copyright © 2021 by Dana Angelo White*

MEAL PREP FOR THE WIN

Chefs, dietitians and intermittent fasters agree that smart cooking strategies are the key to sticking with the program.

by KARLA WALSH

NO MATTER WHAT version of intermittent fasting you're following, the time restrictions can make the plan challenging, especially if you're used to eating whenever a craving hits. According to an October 2019 review in the journal *Nutrients*, which crunched the numbers from 11 studies lasting more than eight weeks, between 20% and 43% of participants dropped out before the study wrapped up.

Just like your vacation would be impossible if you didn't book your flights ahead of time, confirm a hotel and organize on-site transportation, sticking to a specific diet is impossible (or at least very tough) if you don't take the time to plan ahead.

Whether you're following IF or any other diet, one major way to make it easier and boost adherence is meal prep, confirms Cynthia Thurlow, NP, a Richmond, Virginia-based nurse practitioner and author of *Intermittent Fasting Transformation*. "We plan to

The Perks

Give bland beans bolder flavor with zesty pesto sauce.

> “MEAL PREP DOESN’T MEAN MAKING ALL THE WEEK’S MEALS IN ADVANCE.”
> —ASHLEY REAVER, MS, RD

succeed. Setting aside just two or three time slots per week to ensure you have sufficient protein, veggies and carbs prepared allows you to have grab-and-go options that can support a healthy lifestyle while fasting,” Thurlow says.

When you imagine “meal prep,” you might think of those meticulously clean *Home Edit*–inspired refrigerators that are all over Instagram and TikTok. But that’s not necessarily what we’re talking about here. “The definition of meal prep has become so skewed,” says Lauren Grant, a Minneapolis-based culinary food scientist and the owner of zestfulkitchen.com. “Many people think of a container full of egg bites and several portions of two or three fully cooked meals to be reheated all week on repeat. Instead, I encourage people to think of meal prep like a chef preps their kitchen for service.”

Read on to discover how you can follow Grant’s wise lead—no cooking school techniques or budget-busting buying sprees required—to make it easier than ever to fuel yourself deliciously and nutritiously in between fasting periods.

Meal Prep 101

Beyond saving your sanity as you try to ease into a new fasting lifestyle (or keep up with your current one), planning and prepping ahead can also help you save some serious dough, confirms Bridget Lancaster, the Boston-based executive editorial director and host of *America’s Test Kitchen* and *Cook’s Country*.

“Meal prep and planning are the best way to simultaneously save yourself some serious time and money. It cuts down on food waste and allows you to control the ingredients that go into the food that you and your family eat. Considering the ever-increasing price of groceries, meal prep just makes good sense,” Lancaster says.

There’s no one “right” way to meal prep, so don’t feel like you have to stick to the same rules your favorite social media influencer shares, and you definitely don’t have to organize your ingredients in any specific way. (Hey, what happens inside your refrigerator is none of our business!) That said, there are some general tenets that can help you get a meal on your plate faster so when you can break your fast, you need not wait any longer than necessary.

“The best meal prep starts with meal planning. Sit down with paper and pen or a computer or phone and jot down several meals for the week,” Lancaster says. Once you have your menu sketched out, place your online grocery order or shop for it IRL, then channel your inner restaurant prep chef, Grant suggests.

“Consider what components of each dish can be prepped ahead of time to make the cooking time shorter and more efficient,” she says. “Ask yourself what things actually get better with time—or don’t degrade quickly? What part of each meal takes the longest to cook and can be done ahead of time? This is what meal prep should be, and this type of prep is how chefs keep kitchens running smoothly while also pumping out incredibly delicious meals. You can, and should, be doing the same."

Grant makes this a reality in her kitchen by following this four-step plan every Sunday:

- **Prep** (slice, dice, peel, shred, spiralize or "rice") vegetables
- **Cook grains**, such as rice and quinoa
- **Prep any raw meat** (trim, cut into cubes, slice filets, etc.) so you don't have to dirty and clean a cutting board several times
- **Make the sauces or dressings**

From there, you can get a jump on the first recipe or two for the week—taking advantage of opportunities to "piggyback" certain tasks. "If you're already at the stove to simmer grains, cook and crumble a couple of additional strips of bacon at the same time. If your oven is already on to roast chicken thighs for dinner tomorrow, roast salmon filets for tonight at the same time. Or if your dish calls for a little basil and you've bought a big bunch, finely mince the rest of the herbs, divide this among empty ice cube tray wells and cover with a little olive oil before storing in the freezer," Lancaster says. "All of these little things add up."

A well-stocked kitchen—and by that we mean the food in your pantry, fridge and freezer as well as the tools you use to prep with—will make each step along the way easier. These budget-friendly buys are MVPs for Grant, Lancaster and Ashley Reaver, MS, RD, an Oakland, California-based registered dietitian and the creator of the Lower Cholesterol Longer Life Method:

- **Stackable glass food storage containers**
- **A sharp knife and knife sharpener**
- **A cutting board**
- **A food processor or blender**
- **A large skillet**
- **A large sheet pan**

While a counter full of specialized appliances certainly isn't necessary, an Instant Pot can come in handy for pressure cooking large cuts of meat or making big batches of hard-boiled eggs, beans or grains; slow cookers are dreamy for set-and-forget stews and braises; and air-fryers are ideal if you and your crew crave crunch.

As far as the ingredients go, aim to keep these basics in stock:

- **Pantry** Vinegars, nut butter, nuts and seeds, canned vegetables, canned beans, canned fish, stock, pasta, rice, quinoa, dried fruit, spices
- **Refrigerator** Store-bought sauces (barbecue, marinara, pesto, soy, etc.), milk, fruit, vegetables, fermented vegetables, eggs
- **Freezer** Shrimp, scallops, chicken sausage, chicken breast, ground meat or plant-based meat, vegetables, fruit

And, Action!

True, tackling a full week of meals and snacks at once can feel daunting—especially if you currently have pizza delivery on speed dial and are on a first-name basis with your Grubhub driver. But don't feel

Put on some music and treat meal prep like a meditation.

Fast Snack Attack

AS LONG AS it's within your eating window, snacks are a stellar way to sneak in more vitamins and minerals and fuel your day. (You want to cover your nutrient bases during your eating window, right?) "Since protein and fat take longer than carbohydrates to be digested in the stomach, incorporating protein and fat in each meal and snack can help to keep you full," says Ashley Reaver, MS, RD.

HERE ARE SEVEN protein-rich, healthy fat–focused snack ideas from Reaver and the other pros featured in these pages. Prep them ahead so when you break your fast, you can fuel-up STAT.

1 HARD-BOILED EGGS

2 FULL-FAT GREEK YOGURT with berries and granola

3 DRIED FRUIT AND NUT trail mix

4 OVERNIGHT OATS (mix ½ cup oats + ½ cup milk + ¼ cup full-fat Greek yogurt + 1 tablespoon chia seeds; sweeten and flavor as desired and chill 2 hours or overnight)

5 MOZZARELLA STRING CHEESE with an apple

6 CRUDITÉS AND OLIVES with hummus

7 WHOLE GRAIN CRACKERS with nut butter

like you're in it alone. "Meal prep is an important part of an overall cooking strategy, but that doesn't mean it needs to be an all-day, time-consuming weekend event," Reaver says. "It can be as simple as thinking through a weekly menu, organizing your groceries by meals or prepping some of the longer-to-prepare items in advance to make weeknight cooking easier. We need to break away from an all-or-nothing mindset related to meal prepping."

And don't be afraid to take some help from the store. Pre-chopped vegetables, bagged salad kits and already-cooked proteins can drastically trim your prep time, while maintaining the flavor and nutrition your body—and taste buds—need.

For example, by buying one rotisserie chicken at the supermarket on Sunday and Thursday, you have the ultimate head start to check off at least seven of your weekly meals. Use these savvy ideas from Lancaster and Grant for inspiration:

- **Better–Than–Canned Chicken Noodle Soup** Remove the meat from the chicken, then, in a pot of chicken broth, simmer the bones with diced onions, carrots and celery for an hour to make enriched stock. Drain the vegetables, add egg noodles to the reserved stock and cook until tender, then finish by stirring in the reserved chicken (shredded or cubed).
- **Restaurant–Style Salad** Dice the chicken and layer it atop lettuce alongside toasted sliced almonds, halved red grapes and goat cheese. Drizzle with dressing.
- **Wrap Star** Stuff a large whole-wheat tortilla with diced or shredded chicken, cooked and crumbled bacon and a handful of bagged salad mix tossed with store-bought ranch dressing.
- **Easy Enchiladas** Sauté onion, garlic, fresh chilies and Mexican-style spices. Combine with shredded chicken, then wrap with shredded Monterey Jack cheese inside corn tortillas. Place in baking dish, top with store-bought red chili sauce and more cheese; bake until golden.
- **Saucy Sandwiches** Shred the chicken, then toss with barbecue sauce and minced chipotle chili packed in adobo sauce (from a can). Heat and pile between soft hamburger buns with a quick slaw made from pre-shredded cabbage, fresh lime juice and cilantro.
- **Pasta Party** Cook your favorite high-fiber pasta until al dente. Drain and mix with store-bought pesto, shredded chicken and leftover vegetables you'd like to use up.
- **Savory Pie** Thicken chicken stock with a flour and butter roux, then add frozen peas and diced chicken. Transfer to a pie dish, top with thawed frozen pie pastry and bake until golden brown and bubbling.

Enchiladas don't have to be drenched with cheese. Make veggies the star!

Karla Walsh is a health and food writer in Des Moines, Iowa.

Some chicken, corn and any greens make an easy stew.

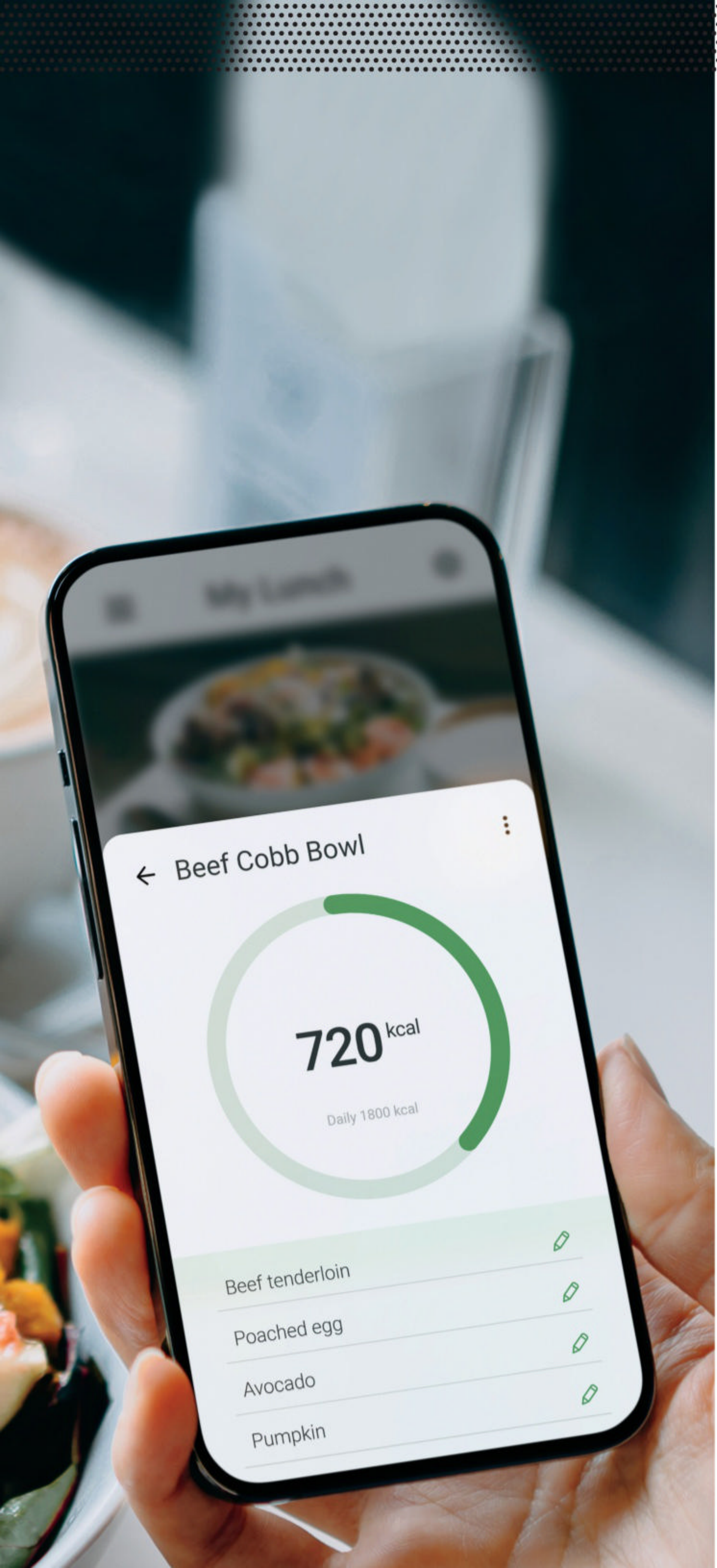
The Perks

Mini chicken pot pies are easy to tote to the office for lunch.

PAIR UP WITH OTHER DIETS

Intermittent fasting can align with many eating styles, but keep these considerations in mind when combining them.

by ELIZABETH MILLARD



BECAUSE INTERMITTENT FASTING is about when you eat rather than what you eat, it can fit into nearly any type of eating style, says Toronto-based Jason Fung, MD, author of *The Complete Guide to Fasting*. In fact, it can often make a good complement to another new style of eating—such as Paleo, the Mediterranean diet or DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension)—since it helps to create more awareness about the foods you're choosing, he suggests.

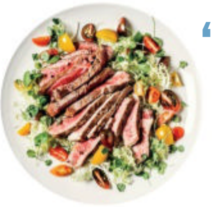
"If you're trying to eat healthier and you're looking to follow a new plan for that, the first step is often to pay more attention to how much and what you're eating," he says. "Limiting your eating time frame can make this easier because it can lead to more meal planning and food tracking."

Also, because "fasting" is an umbrella term and can include different approaches, it's easy to mix and match with a diet plan. For instance, you might be doing Paleo and find that eating all your protein and healthy fats within an eight-hour time block works best for you, or you discover that it's actually fasting one day a week that gives you more energy. No matter which diet track and fasting time frame you choose, here are some considerations to keep in mind:

Focus on Nutrients First

Although intermittent fasting often leads to eating fewer calories for many people, that tends to be a secondary effect rather than the purpose of fasting, says Fung.

Trying to accomplish both—limiting the hours you're eating and restricting calories—at once can be overwhelming when you're just getting started, he says. Instead, make sure you're eating enough calories and adding nutrient-dense foods, and then modify your calorie intake once you've adjusted to this new eating style and time frame if that's what you want to do. If you're on the DASH diet to lower blood your blood pressure, for example, your focus should be on incorporating foods that are rich in potassium, calcium and magnesium, rather than on slashing the amount of calories you're consuming.



> “KEEP IN MIND, THE POINT OF FASTING AND OTHER DIETS IS BETTER HEALTH.”
>
> —JASON FUNG, MD

“Switching to a new way of eating requires some adjustment, and intermittent fasting can help as long as you're not trying to hit too many goals at once,” he adds. “The overall goal, for example, should be to eat healthier and create more awareness around how and when you eat. Think of it as a process that will take time and requires some adjustment.”

Create a Foundation of Healthy Habits Beforehand

Let's say you're on track with whatever diet you've chosen and you're sticking to a regular fasting regimen, such as a 12:12 time frame, but after a couple weeks or even months, nothing has changed—you don't have extra energy, your digestion hasn't improved, your blood pressure is the same as ever, and you're still catching colds way too often. Does that mean you need to change your fasting schedule or should you try a different diet?

Often, it's neither. According to Chris Kresser, Oakland, California-based author of *The Paleo Cure,* some of the cornerstones of both intermittent fasting and the Paleo diet are healthy lifestyle habits such as prioritizing good sleep, managing stress and getting enough exercise. He suggests putting these into place *before* trying to fast and adopting a new way of eating, so that your body is as resilient as possible and ready to take on the challenge.

Play With the Variables

If you've chosen the diet you want and the time frame you want, but feel like you're hungry too often or it's interfering with your schedule, consider playing with different options for fasting, suggests Luiza Petre, MD, a New York-based cardiologist who recommends IF for her patients (when appropriate) and practices it herself.

“It takes time to find out what works best for you and that involves trying different approaches with the understanding that if you're not seeing benefits after a few weeks, you likely need another strategy,” she says.

Petre suggests that the easiest way to start is with the most common variation first, which is an eight-hour window of eating, followed by a fasting period that includes sleep: Try breakfast at 10 a.m. and dinner at 6 p.m. and then don't eat again until the next day.

Take a page from the keto notebook and include healthy fats in your diet.

MED DIET
MILK

If your regular diet is restrictive, fasting may be a big ask.

After a week or two, your body will have adjusted enough to give you an idea if that's the appropriate fasting time frame (16:8 or 14:10) to pair with the diet you've chosen, says Fung. Then you'll know better if you have to tweak your time block to be shorter or longer. You can also try out an all-day fasting variation like 7:1 (which means eating normally for seven days, followed by one full-day of fasting) or 5:2 to see whether that makes a difference in how you feel, not just hunger-wise but energy- and mood-wise, too.

Watch Out for Feelings of Deprivation

Although intermittent fasting can be combined with any eating approach, including a keto diet, it's important to ensure you don't feel a sense of restriction, which could lead to binge eating within your eating window, says Fung. Keto—which involves eating a very low-carb, high-fat and adequate protein diet—is challenging for many people to maintain on its own. Add fasting to the mix and it may feel even more daunting to follow.

"I do think that keto and intermittent fasting work well together," Fung adds. "But if you've tried it and find that you're really struggling, especially if you've tried different fasting strategies, then it may be time to choose one or the other."

You could stick with the fasting but shift to a Mediterranean diet, DASH, Paleo or plant-based eating—anything that makes you feel nourished instead of deprived. Fung adds that maybe just lowering your calorie intake and doing fasting will be enough of a change to get you closer to whatever your health goals might be.

No matter what you're trying, note the effects you're seeing, including variables like sleep, energy level, mood, digestion (including things like reflux or constipation) and overall concentration and focus. "The point of these approaches, including fasting, is to improve your health long-term, and there's no one-size-fits-all strategy for that," he says. "Ultimately, it comes down to paying attention to what works well for you and building on that."

Don't Let Hunger Trip You Up

YOU'RE PAIRING A different eating style with intermittent fasting and you're veering into hangry territory. Is that normal? Definitely! It doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong. It takes time for your body to adjust to a new way of eating, especially if you're making major changes, says Kara Hoerr, RDN, a Madison, Wisconsin-based dietitian. Besides the fact that it's been forever since your last bite, another reason for the hunger pangs might be what you're eating, she says.

"INCLUDING A PROTEIN or fat helps slow down the release of carbohydrates into your bloodstream," she adds. "If you have a piece of fruit, it's going to be quickly digested, leaving you feeling hungry soon afterward. But by pairing an apple with cheese or peanut butter or having the potato as a part of a meal versus on its own, you slow down the digestion of those carbohydrates, you reduce the spike in blood sugar and you feel fuller for longer with the combination of other macronutrients in the meal."

BUT, AS IS true of eating in general, even when it's not restricted in any way, know that there could be other things that mimic hunger, she says. This includes feeling stressed, bored or overwhelmed. During these waves of emotions, you may not be physically hungry, but you're accustomed to eating to dampen the feelings. When that happens, try to bring awareness to what you're feeling and then try exercising, such as going for a walk outside or doing some yoga stretches, or practice some deep breathing.

5 TRICKS TO FEEL FULLER LONGER

Don’t be hangry. These science-backed tips will help you feast wisely so you’re more satisfied as you pass the time.

by **KARLA WALSH**

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The Perks

While warm spinach shrinks down, raw leaves can bulk up smoothies.

HUNGRY LIKE THE wolf during your fasting windows? That's totally normal when you're first diving into intermittent fasting. But after two to four weeks your body should ease into your new routine, according to research by Mark Mattson, PhD, a neuroscientist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, who has studied intermittent fasting for more than 25 years.

To make it easier to get over that first-month hump—or even if it's been longer and you still find yourself bingeing at your last meal of the day in anticipation of the foodless slog ahead—there are several science-backed ways to trick your body into feeling fuller longer. The tips below can help you stay on track.

Pump Up the Volume

Volumetrics is the concept of consuming food that contains a lot of water, like fruits, veggies, smoothies or soups; or air, like popcorn. These low-calorie foods will "help you stay fuller longer, feel more satisfied, and keep you hydrated," says Miami-based Roxana Ehsani, MS, RD, a national media spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. A 2017 *Nutrition Bulletin* review confirmed that people who noshed on more water-rich, volumetrics-friendly foods naturally ate fewer calories throughout the day.

Elizabeth Shaw, MS, RDN, CPT, a San Diego-based registered dietitian and owner of shawsimpleswaps.com, suggests starting a meal with a big salad or broth-based soup or blending riced cauliflower or spinach into smoothies. You can pump up the volume with more than just veggies and fruit, too. Try stirring a chopped-up hard-boiled egg white or two into your bowl of oatmeal or adding a cup of plain popcorn to stretch your serving of trail mix.

Pack In More Protein

A diet with a breakdown of 10% to 15% protein, 30% fat and 55% to 60% carbs is standard in both U.S. and Canadian dietary guidelines. But shifting that ratio ever so slightly—to 20% to 25% protein, 30% to 35% fat and 45% to 50% carbs—and following that strategy for 16 weeks, was shown to offer a bevy of benefits, according to a *British Journal of Nutrition* study. The people who ate more protein not only lost more weight and body fat than their lower-protein peers, but they also found the plan easier to stick with. Since "protein helps with satiety signaling," Cynthia Thurlow, NP, a Richmond, Virginia-based nurse practitioner and the author of *Intermittent Fasting Transformation*, recommends her clients aim for about 30 grams of protein per meal as a starting point. A cup of cottage cheese (28 grams) with berries at meal one, 4 ounces of salmon (23 grams) with 1 cup of lentils (18 grams) and some broccoli for meal two, and 1 cup of quinoa (8 grams) with 3 ounces of

Quinoa provides fiber and protein, making it a natural for your bowls.

> **"BEING DEHYDRATED CAN TRIGGER FEELINGS OF HUNGER, TOO."**
>
> —ROXANA EHSANI, MS, RD

Filling up on soup, veggies and healthy fat is a scale-friendly trick no matter what diet you're following.

turkey (26 grams) on whole grain bread with a salad will easily get you over that hurdle. (If you're eating fewer meals, spread out your intake.)

Get Your Fix of Fiber

Most Americans consume way less fiber than the 25 to 38 grams recommended for women and men, respectively. And it's not doing your appetite any favors. "The most filling meals and snacks contain a bounty of high-fiber foods with a mix of protein, fat and complex carbs," Shaw says. Research backs this up: Fiber tends to slow digestion (translation: You feel fuller longer), while increasing the levels of a hunger-related hormone, ghrelin, that tells your brain it's satisfied on fewer calories than you might be on a fiber-free meal. For easiest digestion, divide your fiber evenly throughout your meals and snacks rather than trying to pack it all into one eating occasion.

The Perks

Eating less can increase your awareness of hydration. Be sure to drink enough.

More H_2O

While water shouldn't replace a meal or snack, staying hydrated can help keep your appetite in check during fasting hours. "Sometimes we think we're hungry but we're just thirsty or dehydrated," Ehsani says.

The same part of the brain regulates both hunger and thirst, and can easily mix them up. In one small study published in the *European Journal of Nutrition*, participants who drank 19 ounces of water before meals ate, on average, 22% fewer calories at the next meal than their peers who entered the meal "dry." If you find plain water to be a little too ho-hum, jazz it up with herbs or fresh slices of citrus or try tea.

Chill Out

If you're constantly stressed out, you may never feel as full as you could. A 2017 study in the journal *Obesity* found that individuals who reported higher rates of chronic stress had difficulties regulating ghrelin (yep, that aforementioned hunger hormone). They also had higher levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that amps up appetite, especially for energy-dense, sugary, fatty and salty foods. "Digestion starts in our brains, so take a few deep breaths before starting a meal," Thurlow suggests. "This helps stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which increases stomach acid while lowering cortisol levels so you crave fewer salty and sugary foods."

ID Your Eating Triggers

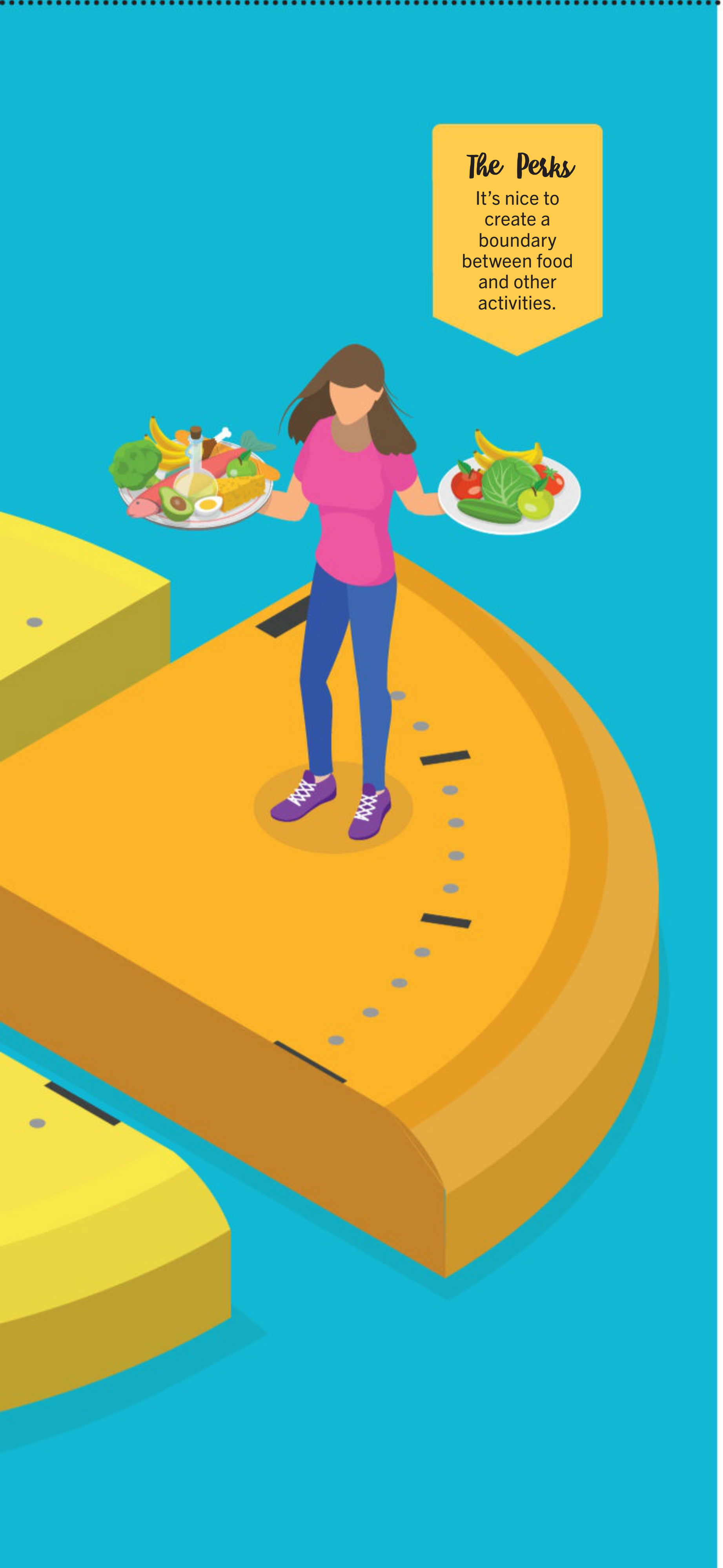
SINCE INTERMITTENT FASTING involves only eating within certain windows, you'll rapidly become more aware of your regular eating habits, including those times that you turn to food when you're not actually physically hungry.

YOUR HABITS, EVEN just a certain time on the clock, such as 4 p.m. snack time or having a bite before bed—as well as stress, exhaustion, depression, loneliness and boredom are all common triggers, as is a craving for a comforting dose of childhood nostalgia.

IF IT'S NOT within your feeding window and your hunger isn't truly strong, Roxana Ehsani, MS, RD, suggests having a heart to heart with yourself. "If you catch yourself turning to a comfort meal or reaching for a snack, ask, 'what is the reason I'm turning to food at this time? Am I tired? Lonely? Did I have a hard day at work?'"

JUST KEEP IN mind that emotional eating isn't always a bad thing, says Ashley Reaver, MS, RD, an Oakland, California-based registered dietitian and creator of the Lower Cholesterol Longer Life Method. "If you're celebrating a birthday with your kids with cake and ice cream, even if you don't totally 'need' either, that's OK. However, when you turn to food continually as the sole response to an emotion, it needs to be addressed," she says.

IF YOU'RE NOT famished—say, you're at a 1 to 3 on a scale of 1 (ravenous) to 10 (stuffed)—and it's not truly a special occasion, try switching to a non-food coping mechanism, such as a call with a friend, a walk, going to bed earlier or journaling. And consider talking to a dietitian if you find it challenging to break the pattern.



The Perks
It's nice to create a boundary between food and other activities.

I TRIED IF FOR 30 DAYS

Eating this way highlighted some weak spots in one fasting newbie's diet.

by JANET LEE

LIKE MANY PEOPLE, I'm not very good at dieting. My fridge is always stocked with plenty of fruit, veggies and lean protein but I also enjoy a carb. Chips, crackers and sweets are my kryptonite, and willpower is not my strong suit.

As a health journalist, I'm not a fan of restrictive diets in general (think: keto, Paleo or Whole 30) because I don't think they're sustainable in the long-term. I tried Atkins once for a week and had horrible brain fog. Keto? Never gonna do it. I'll take the carbs and the belly fat, thank you. The lack of fiber would make me miserable. But intermittent fasting, and especially time-restricted eating, intrigued me. The idea of simply not eating during

There's no failure in dieting; you just have to keep trying.

certain hours—the bulk of that time being overnight—seemed much more doable to me than limiting carbs or fat or gluten or anything else. So I gave it a try—and recruited a couple of friends to do it with me (read about their experience, far right). Here's what happened:

> **"IT'S MUCH EASIER FOR ME TO JUST NOT EAT UNTIL A CERTAIN TIME THAN TO MONITOR EVERY BITE OR PORTION."**
>
> —JANET LEE

Week 1

I opted to start with a 16:8 approach right off the bat, eating between 12 and 8 p.m. That suits my schedule the best since I often don't get home from work until 6:30 or 7. The first day, the hunger hit at about 11 a.m. I promptly texted my friends, *I'm starving!! One hour to go!* followed by several wailing emojis. They felt the same way. I noticed I was very focused on being hungry and not being able to assuage it—almost like my brain was panicking. Still, I managed to make it to noon and have a normal lunch and, later on, dinner.

During this first week (once the panic of being hungry wore off) I realized that I usually don't even get hungry until 11 a.m., and an hour of hunger isn't that bad. If I'm busy, I don't notice it. On the weekends, though, it's harder to fast as I do notice it more. Thankfully, I never woke up ravenous in the middle of the night, which has happened when I was dieting.

Six out of seven days this week I didn't cheat even by a teaspoon of sugar in my coffee. On Friday, some friends came over and I ended up nibbling and drinking wine until almost 10. Instead of trying to go 16 hours from then, which I knew would be difficult, I just stuck to my original plan to fast until noon the next day. I figured, one day of 14:10 wouldn't wreck everything.

Even with a normal diet, my digestion is my Achilles' heel. I'm prone to bloating and reflux. This week I noticed that I had less indigestion at night because I wasn't eating or drinking late. But there was one big sticking point: my colon. I only pooped once this week. That's slow even by my already slow standards.

This first week I was just getting used to the rhythm of waiting to eat until later and stopping eating at 8, instead of continuing to nibble and nosh. So far it was much easier to simply not eat until a certain time than to monitor every bite and portion size.

Week 2

This week I was less successful staying in my 12-to-8 window due to various reasons. A couple of days I woke up very early and I was extra ravenous by 10 a.m. One night I forgot it was after 8 and had a snack while I was watching television. That's not too surprising since eating mindlessly while watching

TV is easily my worst habit. I thought it would be easier to break, but I'm finding I really have to pay attention to it.

I'm trying to be aware that when I do get hungry, it's not the end of the world. It will usually pass quickly. If I'm home, I'll go run errands or get out of the house until I can eat.

My digestion was still slow. I think it's because the meal I'm skipping—breakfast—is often a bowl of Raisin Bran, which is high in fiber. I run this issue by Washington, D.C.-area dietitian Stephanie Clarke, RD. "It's a good idea to have something like Benefiber on hand in case you experience constipation or eat something like energy bites with oatmeal and flax," she says. "Make sure you're getting plenty of water, too." I add a magnesium supplement to my daily lineup as well.

Week 3

I was still successful most days of the week but I slipped up when not paying attention, or some days I just got too hungry. I just kept trying. Even if I can fast for 14 or 15 hours, it's still beneficial, I told myself.

While I tried to work in the Raisin Bran during my eating window, I was often full during those eight hours and I didn't want to eat anything else. I have to figure out what I can take out to add that in.

Week 4

My digestion seemed to get smoother and more regular this week, which was a relief, and I've definitely had less heartburn than usual. I only lost a couple of pounds, but I didn't really try to eat less; I ate what I normally would between lunch and dinner. I've had good energy all month, although my sleep has been very up and down.

The best thing so far about doing IF is it has shown me where my problem area is: evening snacking while watching TV. Many nights I'll just do something else to avoid the temptation to nosh.

Usually when I end a "diet," I'm excited to get back to normal, but I'm planning to stick with time-restricted eating. At the very least I'll do 12:12 or 14:10. When I can, I'll do 16:8. That's what makes IF more doable lifestyle-wise than some other restrictive diets. It's really not that hard—unless you're doing something more extreme. (I doubt I'll try fasting for a whole day.)

So yes, I'm a convert!

Beware of cutting out too much fiber!

A Fasting Duo

I TALKED MY friends Beth and Garry Blevins, who live in Overland Park, Kansas, into doing IF with me (misery loves company, right?). "The most I've ever lost in a month is five pounds and I lost three pounds doing IF," explains Beth, who's 61. "I can also see a slight reduction in my stomach and hips." (Garry, who's 58, didn't lose any weight or inches that he noticed.)

BOTH BETH AND Garry struggled with low energy in the morning on their 16:8 plan, but they powered through. She tried to walk or work in the yard almost daily and found that staying hydrated helped thwart hunger pangs. As for Garry, "I got more done before noon than I probably ever have, because if I couldn't eat, I felt I should get stuff done," he says. Still, by lunchtime, Beth would often overeat since she was so ravenous. "I would feel kind of weighed down, but toward the end of the month, I wasn't even that hungry at noon. Sometimes I'd push the end of my fast back to 1 and I didn't eat as much," she says.

FOR BETH, THE perks of fasting included reduced appetite and cravings, having one less meal to prepare and feeling better overall. "It also forced me to break my pre-bedtime snack habit." Garry agreed and added, "Having to think about what you're going to eat and when you're going to eat it was helpful as well. It made us plan our meals."

BESIDES THEIR LOW a.m. energy, the couple couldn't cite many downsides to IF. They said doing it together made it more tolerable. "We will continue to do IF but maybe modify it to 11 to 7 or 10 to 6, and try to eat earlier," says Beth. "You have to figure out what works for your schedule and habits. We also want to eat healthier during our eating window. That would've made the difference in terms of weight loss."

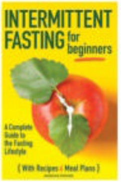
RESOURCES

Need guidance? Inspiration? Support? Try these books, podcasts and apps.

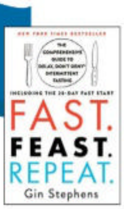
by JANET LEE

IT CAN BE hard to find in-person support for fasting but there are a myriad of books, apps and podcasts out there, delivering the latest info on fasting research, how to do it right, mistakes to avoid and more.

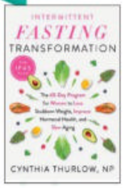
Books



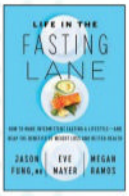
Intermittent Fasting for Beginners *by Amanda Swaine* You'll learn all about the different types of fasts and how to find the one that works best for you. Swaine also walks you through common pitfalls to avoid so you can feel your best while fasting.



Fast. Feast. Repeat. *by Gin Stephens* She emphasizes eating a healthy diet during your feeding window, and how the metabolic benefits of fasting are much more important than simply dropping pounds.



Intermittent Fasting Transformation: The 45–Day Program for Women to Lose Stubborn Weight, Improve Hormonal Health, and Slow Aging *by Cynthia Thurlow, NP* For women who like to have an "end date" to achieve a goal or just try out IF, this book is for you.



Life in the Fasting Lane: How to Make Intermittent Fasting a Lifestyle—and Reap the Benefits of Weight Loss and Better Health *by Jason Fung MD, Eve Mayer and Megan Ramos* Fung has researched the topic more than most and in this book, he explains how to settle into a fasting lifestyle so it feels normal.

Apps

Simple: Intermittent Fasting This OG fasting app lets you select your goals, such as boosting energy or eating more mindfully, provides expert tips and has an eating-window countdown clock. It also tells you what's happening in your body at different stages of fasting. *(from $15 per month available on iOS and Android)*

BodyFast Choose from 10 different fasting plans along with meal planning tips, recipes and coaching. *(There's a free version, but subs start at $35, available on iOS from as little as $17 per month with an annual subscription.)*

Intermittent Fasting Coach Besides tracking your fasting hours and providing easy get-started tips, this app has recipes (keto, low-carb, healthy snacks and smoothies). *(from $3 per month, available on iOS and Android)*

Podcasts

The Intermittent Fasting Podcast
Hosted by Melanie Avalon and Cynthia Thurlow, NP This 'cast dives deep into all sorts of factors that come up when fasting, including "window creep," stress and sleep changes.

Intermittent Fasting Stories
Hosted by Gin Stephens It features interviews with real people who have discovered the formula for success—which varies from individual to individual.

The Fasting for Life Podcast
Hosted by Dr. Scott Watier and Tommy Welling The show answers listeners' questions about OMAD, TRE or beyond. Most episodes are less than 30 minutes.

Instagram

@doctorvmd
High-energy longevity expert Kien Vuu, MD, provides a steady stream of actionable health tips, including for fasting.

@drkristavarady
A researcher, Krista Varady, PhD, stays on top of new fasting science and answers common questions about various modes of fasting.

@shana.hussin.rdn
It's always good to have a dietitian weigh in on fasting and Shana Hussin, RDN, brings her expertise along with an open mind about the research behind this popular way of eating.

@Dr.MindyPelz
Author of the forthcoming (late 2022) *Fast Like a Girl*, Mindy Pelz, DC, discusses fasting, hormone shifts and more.

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
INTERMITTENT
FASTING
For Beginners

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